

Finding Port

Posted originally on the [Archive of Our Own](https://archiveofourown.org/works/22721398) at <https://archiveofourown.org/works/22721398>.

Rating:	Explicit
Archive Warning:	No Archive Warnings Apply
Category:	M/M
Fandom:	The Walking Dead (TV)
Relationship:	Daryl Dixon/Rick Grimes
Characters:	Daryl Dixon , Rick Grimes , Carl Grimes , Lori Grimes , Shane Walsh , Hershel Greene
Additional Tags:	Alpha/Beta/Omega Dynamics , A/B/O , Alpha Rick Grimes , Omega Daryl Dixon , Slow Burn , Knotting , No love for Lori
Language:	English
Series:	Part 1 of A Port in the Storm
Stats:	Published: 2020-02-14 Completed: 2020-02-16 Words: 25,020 Chapters: 13/13

Finding Port

by [MaximusMeridian](#)

Summary

Quick shots between episodes and rewrites where I felt necessary of seasons 1 and 2 to show Rick and Daryl's relationship develop. Really just setting up this universe. Chapters are named based off of what episode has relevant information needed. Rated E for future chapters.

Notes

See the end of the work for [notes](#)

Chapter 1: Season 1 Episode 6 Extra Scene

“I thought the Chinese kid’s face was gonna be the reddest tonight.” Daryl commented when he saw Rick. Daryl had slipped away from the group as everyone started to settle in, finding a room a bit past the others for himself.

He didn’t know why Rick had come to his room instead of the one he’d chosen with Lori. And Rick looked too hammered to answer.

“Yeah... well, I was always a light weight.” Rick sighed, walking over to the bed where Daryl was sitting, only stumbling a little before sitting down, a little too close to Daryl’s side.

“Guess at least you’re somewhere safe to drink.” Daryl shrugged, drinking a deep gulp from his own wine bottle.

“Guess so.” Rick agreed, nodding slowly.

Daryl sat quietly, listening to Rick’s quiet breathing and his own heartbeat. Rick had to be here for a reason. *Wait for long enough and he would expose it.*

“See, I was hoping that... if I was drunk...” Rick started to explain, leaning back heavily on one arm. “That maybe... maybe I’d want to be around my wife. Y’know, maybe I’d... I’d be *into her* again.”

Daryl raised an eyebrow. *Shit, he was not drunk enough to help Rick through his marriage issues. Especially not sex related ones.*

“Been stressed lately, keeping folks safe.” Daryl mumbled, taking another swig from his bottle. “Makes sense you ain’t been thinking with your dick.”

Rick chuckled, nodding a little. “Yeah... yeah, that would make sense. Except... even when my dick *is* thinking.” He giggled a bit at that last sentence. *Fuck, he is a lightweight.*

“When it does think...” Rick explained. “It ain’t *Lori* it’s pointing me to.”

Daryl frowned, looking at him in confusion before shrugging a little. “I guess Andrea is alright... ‘bout the same level of looks as Lori.”

“It ain’t Andrea.” Rick shook his head. “*Or Carol... or Jacqui.* It isn’t one of the girls... and that’s what’s so damn confusing. See, my whole life... I don’t think I’ve ever looked at a guy twice. Never in the way I’d look at a woman.”

Daryl took several deep drinks of his wine, choking on the force of it. *Shit, shit, shit. He needed to be a lot drunker for Rick’s coming out. Wine wasn’t gonna cut this. He needed bourbon, or hell, even vodka.*

“End of the world, man.” Daryl mumbled awkwardly. “Folks comin’ back from the dead... eatin’ other folks... weird shit, man. Explorin’ ain’t the *weirdest* thing to happen.”

“Being interested in a pain in the ass redneck who’s threatened to shoot me or kick my ass sure seems weird.” Rick said quietly, looking up at Daryl guiltily.

Daryl swallowed hard, shocked by the admission. *What? Rick was a married man, up ‘til tonight, Daryl had thought happily. Now he was interested in men... more specifically, Daryl?*

“Think you had too much to drink.” Daryl remarked, coughing a bit awkwardly at the end. “Man don’t go from Lori to me. You’d have said anybody you were talking to, I think. You’re just... drunk, man. That’s all.”

Rick looked down, shaking his head. “No, Daryl... I don’t think I would have. You see... something told me...” He pointed to his chest seriously. “Something *in here* told me... to come see you. Not, not Shane... not *my best friend*, who I’ve never kept a secret from in my life. But you.”

Daryl cleared his throat, rubbing the back of his neck awkwardly. “Shit, man. Can’t spring shit like this on me when I’m drinkin’.”

“Lemme try something.” Rick insisted suddenly. “You hate it, you can deck me... and do it again when you’re sober tomorrow too. But... I’ll get this outta my system and we can be normal, y’know?”

Daryl hesitated, knowing this was a bad idea... *man, was it a bad idea*, but he nodded, agreeing even though his brain was screaming every awful thing he could imagine Merle saying about this.

“Alright, just... long as you keep your pants on, man.” Daryl said firmly.

“No clothes coming off.” Rick promised, leaning up and pressing his lips to Daryl’s.

It was clumsy at first, just lips smushed against lips. But Rick seemed to find where he wanted to be, gently pulling Daryl’s bottom lip between his before settling into an easier and gentler rhythm.

Daryl was shocked, his eyes wide and surprised as Rick kissed him. That shouldn’t have sent a chill up his spine, shouldn’t have stirred something low in his belly like this.

Daryl decided to blame it on the booze, closing his eyes and leaning into the kiss. It took a moment before they settled into an easy rhythm together, Rick’s hand coming up to cradle Daryl’s cheek and pulling him down to lay on the bed.

Rick let out a soft groan against Daryl’s lips, his free hand moving down Daryl’s side and pausing on his hip. It only settled for a few moments before his hand got busy again, moving down Daryl’s thigh. He pulled Daryl’s leg over his hip, pressing their hips flush together...

Daryl pulled back from the kiss, a rush of dizziness from lack of air and excess wine causing him to take several moments to catch his breath.

“Rick, stop. You’re married.” Daryl panted softly. “To a woman.”

Rick sighed, leaning forward and pressing his face against Daryl’s throat. He pressed feather light kisses there, leading Daryl to squirm a bit under the attention.

“Rick, *stop*.” He said more firmly, putting a hand on Rick’s chest to push him back.

Rick seemed to sulk a little but did as he was told, his gaze hazy and dark with eagerness.

“You’re drunk *and married*.” Daryl reminded, his voice not nearly as angry as he could muster. He didn’t want to be angry or rude. He wanted to stay right here and just enjoy every touch, but that wasn’t his place. *And Rick would regret it in the morning.*

Daryl didn’t want to lose the group just because he’d let his pants do his thinking while he was drinking.

“Yeah...” Rick sighed, moving back and sitting up to look down at Daryl. The younger man chose to believe that the longing he saw there was a product of his drunken brain and not what Rick really felt.

“Ask me tomorrow how I feel.” Rick insisted. “You think I’m just drunk and don’t really want this. Ask me tomorrow if you really want the answer.”

Daryl shook his head, sitting up slowly. “Go back to your room, Rick. To your wife and son... To the normal you got to keep. If you even remember this tomorrow, you can blame it on being drunk.”

Rick frowned but nodded his head, reluctantly standing up. “yeah... I guess that makes sense...” He rubbed his face like it would help relieve the fog in his head and he looked over at Daryl, offering him a bit of a goofy smile. “See you tomorrow, Daryl.”

“See you tomorrow, Rick.” Daryl nodded, watching the older man leave the room.

Daryl took a deep breath and covered his face with his hands, letting out the breath with a long groan. “Fuck me, man... how’d I get into this kind a thing?”

The next morning, Daryl woke with a throbbing headache. A pained thumping that he hadn’t felt in his skull since before shit hit the fan. He managed to find his way down the halls of the CDC’s dorms with a groan, bumping into a solid body. Daryl winced, groaning. “Dammit, man. Watch where you_”

“Morning, Daryl.” Came a familiar quiet tone.

Shit. “Hey Rick.” Daryl said softly, looking up at him slowly.

“Your head feel as awful as mine?” Rick asked casually, chuckling softly.

“Yeah, man. Hell of a night.” Daryl agreed.

“Yeah... yeah it was.” Rick agreed, rubbing the back of his neck and looking down the hallway curiously.

“So, look, last night...” Rick hesitated.

Daryl’s back stiffened and he shifted his footing, chewing the inside of his cheek nervously.

“I’m sorry for dumping all that on you.” Rick continued. “That wasn’t fair... and I shouldn’t have emotionally vomited all over you.”

“Least it wasn’t real vomit.” Daryl commented, trying to make a joke of the situation. “Whole lot shittier.”

“True.” Rick laughed before smiling faintly. “Listen, what I said last night... What, what I *did* last night_”

“Hey, crazy shit happens when folks are drunk.” Daryl shook his head. “Don’t worry about it.”

“Thank you.” Rick said softly.

Daryl nodded, turning to walk down the hall. “Let’s go eat.”

“In a minute.” Rick assured.

Daryl shrugged, heading down with his hands in his pockets.

“I meant what I said last night though.” Rick called after him. “And I’d do it again... if you were interested.”

Daryl must have made quite the sight, his jaw lax and his eyes wide with shock. “Fucking Rick Grimes.”

Chapter 2: Season 2 Episode 1

Chapter Summary

Boys finally start to communicate... though it doesn't do much. Yet.

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for [notes](#)

With Rick by his side, Daryl tracks Carol's little girl through the woods, anxious to find her.

Daryl didn't know why, maybe because she was so fragile and different from him... Maybe because she was exactly what an omega was supposed to be and he wasn't, but Daryl felt a desperate need to protect Carol, and in turn, her daughter as well.

That's why he was so quick to go with Rick to search the woods. It wasn't until they were alone that Daryl realized his mistake.

Rick was close to his side, enough distance to not seem creepy, but close enough for the hair on the back of Daryl's neck to stand up.

"You got a reason for trying to drool down my neck?" Daryl mumbled, his eyes still down and tracking the trail the little girl's footprints had left.

"I'm not trying to drool on you." Rick insisted. "I'm trying to follow your lead and keep an eye out at the same time. If you're looking for signs, I'm looking out for walkers. Thought it made sense."

"Guess it does..." Daryl mumbled, kicking at the dirt absently before shaking his head and picking up his pace.

"Daryl, we, uh, never talked about what happened at the CDC." Rick said quietly.

Daryl rolled his eyes. "You think that's important now?"

"This is the first time you and I have been alone since then." Rick pointed out. "Don't think I can't see how you're avoiding me."

Daryl grumbled. So Rick had noticed that... *and here Daryl though he was being subtle in avoiding Rick.*

"Say what you wanna say then." Daryl murmured.

Rick hesitated, obviously considering his next words closely. “Daryl, are you... are you an omega?”

Daryl winced, freezing between steps. *Shit. Okay, so he hadn't been expecting that question so bluntly.* At least, he'd hoped for a little more ginger stepping around it, or maybe Rick never even actually getting around to asking it. Something other than hearing the word and having to admit to it.

“Why's it matter?” Daryl growled, instantly defensive. He couldn't help it. No one, *no alpha*, asked that kind of question without wanting something.

Rick frowned, thrown aback. “I... I remember our kiss. And I swore I felt... something. Something that wouldn't be on a beta. And, well, you're definitely not an alpha. No offense.”

Daryl groaned heavily before shaking his head. “Fuck. Yes, alright? Don't fucking tell any of them.”

“I won't say a word.” Rick assured. “I'm just glad I'm not crazy.”

Daryl chewed the inside of his cheek anxiously, shifting his weight from foot to foot. “What's it got to do with all this?”

“I noticed your scent.” Rick explained. “When we kissed, it just... I felt it. I know that sounds insane, but I'd never noticed it before. It wasn't until I was close to you and your guard was down that I... noticed it.”

Daryl rolled his eyes. “Easier ways to tell me I stink, man.”

“Stink isn't the word I'd use.” Rick said under his breath before clearing his throat. “Look, I'm not... interested in finding an omega, okay? I'm married to Lori. And despite what I might have said while drunk, I love her. I do.”

Daryl wanted to make a comment about how Rick sounded like he was trying to convince himself, but he decided not to. He wasn't that much of an ass.

“I need to know why I can't get you out of my mind.” Rick explained hesitantly. “Why I'm stuck on you like this... Figured you were the person I needed to tell you about it.”

“You expecting me to deck you?” Daryl asked. “That make you feel better?”

Rick nodded, “If that'll make *you* feel better. It would definitely make a point that you're not interested in me.”

Daryl started walking again, twisting his fingers around the strap of his crossbow anxiously. *Yeah, that was the real problem.*

“Because, if I remember right... you didn't take the opportunity when I told you to hit me if you hated me.” Rick explained, following him. “And, well, I think you kissed back...”

“Just didn’t seem real fair.” Daryl shrugged dismissively. “Wasn’t gonna hit you while you were drunk.”

“Why couldn’t I smell you before?” Rick asked curiously, changing the subject slightly.

Daryl sighed, shaking his head and staying focused on the tracks for a while

They came across a lone walker with flesh in its teeth and took it down quickly before Daryl gutted it and discovered that thankfully it was only a woodchuck that the walker had eaten, as opposed to the little girl like they’d feared.

Daryl was wiping his blade clean when he finally spoke up again. “It’s an implant.”

Rick frowned, looking up in confusion. “What are you talking about?”

Daryl sighed, shaking his head. “You asked why you couldn’t smell me. It’s an implant...’bove my hip in my side. It blocks hormones and shit like that.”

“But aren’t implants like that dangerous?” Rick frowned in concern. “I mean, they can ruin your fertility and things like that, right? Make your hormones all screwy?”

Daryl shrugged, “Fertility don’t matter if you ain’t having kids.”

“But what about mating?” Rick asked. “If you met your alpha... how would they know? If you don’t make hormones, then... they’d never know.”

“What’s the point of mating if you ain’t having kids?” Daryl rolled his eyes. “Sides, who wants someone extra to worry about in all this shit?”

Rick frowned, his hands fidgeting as Daryl stood up from the walker’s corpse. “It’s just... having someone to love... to want to come back to... it just, it’s important in this world. A reason to survive.”

“Maybe to you.” Daryl mumbled, pulling his crossbow over his shoulder. “Let’s go back to the highway and the group.”

Daryl started walking back to the highway, feeling Rick’s eyes glued to his back as he walked.

Maybe he was crazy, or maybe he was on edge after the weird discussion with Rick, but... he swore there was an ache in his chest that he hadn’t been feeling before that bizarre discussion.

Why would Rick care if I’m mated or not? I’m not his problem... not like that. Not in any way. I can handle myself.

Are we getting to see why the implant and its placement might be a problem in the future?

Feel free to drop questions and comments!

Chapter 3: Season 2 Episode 5

Chapter Summary

Little bit of rude omega shaming here when Daryl hallucinates Merle. Nothing severe.

Also, perhaps a little spicy moment near the end?

Starting this chapter, every time I quote a line from the show, it will be shown in bold.

Grabbing a horse and leaving that morning just wasn't that big of a deal when it first happened. A horse could get through the woods faster than Daryl on foot.

A horse is also a fucking idiot that stands up and throws you off, down a fucking hill and onto your own crossbow.

Daryl hesitantly reached down and found the spot of pain in his side, realizing that, yes, there was actually a bolt stuck through his side.

He didn't remember passing out.

"Well ain't that just like you, Darlena."

Taking a deep breath hurts...

"'sposed to be doing a job and instead you just lay around."

Daryl struggled to open his eyes, squinting against the bright light. *Shit, it was nearly noon. How long had he been unconscious?*

"If you're gonna lay around like a bitch, you coulda stayed home."

"Fuck off, bro." Daryl finally managed to speak, turning his attention to where he could hear Merle's voice beside him.

"That how you talk to an alpha, boy?" Merle asked, narrowing his eyes down at Daryl. "Lost your manners in just a few weeks without ol Merle?"

"Don't need manners. Ain't like you're real anyway." Daryl mumbled.

"If I were, I would snap a damn knot in your head." Merle answered with a low growl. "Course, maybe you don' even care. You didn't go looking for ol Merle like this... how many miles are ya from the farm? From the sheriff?"

Daryl winced, trying to slowly sit up before giving up and groaning in frustration.

“Ain’t much an alpha, is he? All twiggy... weak.” Merle drawled.

“Rick’s good.” Daryl argued. “And he came back for ya... came with me. We tried, man. You were already gone.”

“You trying to defend him, Darlena?” Merle cocked his head, his face slowly splitting in a cruel grin. “Ohhh, I see. You got an itch. Lil brother found a knot he wants.”

“Shut up.” Daryl argued, forcing himself to sit up now. It hurt like hell and blood was soaking through his shirt.

“Coulda picked a real man at least.” Merle continued to goad him. “Could still try for Shane. He’s a piece a shit, but you know he’s got a knot ‘tween his legs.”

“Fuck off.” Daryl repeated.

Daryl managed to make it back to the farm slowly once he was on his feet. He was limping and dizzy, nauseous as hell, but he was getting back. He could have sworn he heard the sound of people coming toward him, and Daryl had to force his head to lift a bit. The sun was blinding right now, causing a thumping pain in Daryl’s temples. *Probably a concussion... shit.*

In the middle of all the bright light and confusion, Rick took form... holding his gun aimed directly at Daryl’s head.

“Is that Daryl?” that was a voice... *Glenn*, Daryl thought. He processed for a moment how he must look, filthy and covered in blood.

Shit... they think I’m a walker...

“Third time you pointed that thing at my head.” Daryl managed to speak. **“You gonna pull the trigger or what?”**

Relief bloomed across Rick’s face and he lowered the gun, a slow and nervous smile growing.

Faintly Daryl heard a gunshot and less than a second later, he was spun from the force of the shot and thrown to the ground.

“No!” Rick screamed, obviously panicked.

Daryl dimly noted the waver at the end, and the sound of heavy boots rushing to his side. There was more screaming... other voices. *Glenn... maybe Shane?*

He slowly lifted his hand to the side of his head, shaky fingers running over the wound. It only glanced him... *good thing whoever was on guard was a shitty shot.*

“Was kidding.” Daryl groaned, letting himself be pulled to his feet and leaning heavily against the nearby chest. *Rick...*

Through the blood and mud, the dizziness and blood loss... Daryl could catch the briefest hint of a scent... warm and comforting like a campfire... It could only be Rick.

That was the last thought Daryl had before he crumpled, unconscious.

For reasons no one understood, Rick stayed by Daryl's side while Hershel patched him up. Rick stayed quiet and out of the way, but he was present, his eyes watching the younger man for every little sign of pain that showed on his face.

Daryl winced as the gunshot wound to his face was cleaned and relayed using a map where he'd found Sophia's doll.

Every time the other man winced even slightly, Rick had to grip the chair arms to stop himself from jumping to his feet and baring his teeth at Hershel.

Once the wounds were clean, Hershel explained that Daryl needed to wash up before his side could be bandaged. Rick assured that he'd help Daryl to the bathroom to shower which Hershel seemed to accept.

Shane took the map and quietly left the room. Rick assumed it was to go update the group. He didn't care all that much though.

When the door closed behind Shane, Hershel turned to focus on Daryl again.

"Now, young man, Daryl, right?" Hershel asked.

"Yeah." Daryl nodded, wincing a little from the movement.

Hershel nodded in return, packing up his medicine bag carefully as he talked. "You should know you shattered the implant in your side with that bolt. Tore most of it out when you removed it, but it'll leave some scarring."

Daryl tensed, his eyes looking anxious and wide.

Hershel seemed to pause, looking at Rick in surprise. "Were you unaware that you had an omega in your group?"

Rick shook his head. "No. No, I... I knew. The group doesn't. Daryl's tried to hide it as best as he could. He... he didn't want to trouble the group with it."

Daryl seemed torn between relief and continued anxiety when Rick spoke for him, but he didn't comment in any way about it. He stayed quiet and let the two alphas speak.

"Well, as the leader of your group, I assume that you'll handle whatever side effects the sudden destruction of that implant comes with."

Rick frowned in concern. "Are there... are there any in particular we should look out for?"

“Mood swings, irritability, headaches... things any omega comes to expect before a heat.” Hershel explained.

“You mean I gotta put up with that again?” Daryl finally spoke up, clearly distressed. Rick didn’t know much about omega heats, but he could only assume they were unpleasant by Daryl’s reaction.

“It’s very possible.” Hershel nodded. “Well, very likely I should say. But I’m not a human doctor. I don’t know any specifics.”

Daryl groaned, covering his face with his hand. “*Fucking_*”

“Do not use that kind of language in my house.” Hershel cut him off sharply, earning an audible click of Daryl’s mouth closing in response.

“He’ll be careful.” Rick assured, putting a hand on Daryl’s shoulder. “And he’ll watch his mouth, as will everyone else, I promise you.”

Hershel seemed to accept that, nodding and grabbing his bag. “Don’t stand in the hot water too long. You might faint.”

Daryl didn’t move, barely offering a mumble in response.

Rick spoke up instead, offering a genuine ‘thank you’ to the vet before he left.

The remaining two men sat in silence for several minutes, hardly acknowledging each other.

Rick took a few deep breathes, trying to think of what to say. Now that Hershel didn’t have all of his medical equipment in such close proximity, Rick started to notice a woodsy scent.

It was familiar, from growing up in a little town in Georgia surrounded by woods, but there was a more recent memory of it too.

“I can smell you again.” Rick whispered, surprised that he voiced it. He hadn’t meant to acknowledge it, *not out loud*.

When Daryl didn’t immediately speak up or snap at him, Rick continued. “It’s like... like fresh rain in the woods, y’know? How... how clean and new it makes the world smell?”

He smiled faintly, rubbing the back of his neck awkwardly. “Reminds me of where I grew up. Spending summer on my grandparents’ farm near the mountains.”

Daryl seemed to relax a little bit more, slowly lowering his hand from his face. “I grew up in the mountains. Know what you’re talking about.”

“I’ve only known a few omegas in my life.” Rick explained softly. “But they always had some kind of sweet smell about them. Like cotton candy or caramel. It’s nice for a little

while, but... it's not what I like. Just, wrong. I can't explain it... You though, you're nice. The smell, I mean."

"You're shit at compliments." Daryl mumbled.

Rick chuckled sheepishly. "Sorry. I, uh, was never real good at talking. About feelings especially. Lori, she hates that about me. Used to scream at me, saying I should just yell and get things out of my system."

"You're a weird alpha." Daryl commented quietly. "My brother... my old man... they were both normal alphas. They'd yell and throw a punch before you could blink."

Rick nodded, looking over at Daryl curiously. "How did he take it? Merle. He just didn't strike me as the sort to treat an omega well. Not even his own brother."

"Merle tried, man." Daryl said softly. "He didn't like it, but he tried. He covered me, made sure I had meds... that kind of thing. Got the implant after he left though. Without him covering me... it just... wasn't safe."

"When did he leave?" Rick asked, leaning in a bit to listen.

"Few days after I turned thirteen... he joined up with the army for a while... was twenty-one. He just... up and left one day. *'So long, lil' brother. Off to be a hero and shit'.*"

"He didn't cover you for long then." Rick mumbled.

"Almost two years... dragged me around to different drug houses while he lit up with his friends..." Daryl sniffed, sitting up slowly. "C'mon, I need to shower."

Rick stood up instantly and helped pull Daryl to his feet, keeping an arm close for him to lean on or grab if he needed.

"I'm gonna move my tent and shit... away from the group. Need space if I gotta ride this shit out."

"I can cover you." Rick offered quietly. "I don't... I don't smell as strong as Merle. Hell, or Shane even, but... I am an alpha. I won't let anyone give you hell. You've been busting your ass looking for Sophia, hell, you almost died today! If they try to judge you based off of something you were born with instead of how you've proved yourself..."

He shook his head to stop his own rambling, "I won't let them treat you like dirt because some natural selection thing screwed you over."

A small smile twitched at the corner of Daryl's lips and he nodded in return. "Thanks... really. Nobody, nobody looks out without expecting something though. What's the catch?"

"The catch is that you keep playing your part." Rick smiled. "You keep being you. You keep helping the group. That's all it takes."

"Man, you really are a weird alpha." Daryl shook his head.

“What do you say?” Rick asked. “Think you can trust me?”

Daryl snorted, “Hell nah. But you’re better than most.”

Rick couldn’t help but laugh at that.

Helping Daryl walk to the bathroom was the easy part. The hard part was the argument about how Daryl was going to shower on his own. Or a more pressing matter, how was he going to get undressed by himself.

“Said I could handle it.” Daryl argued, crossing his arms stubbornly over his chest.

“And I told Hershel I’d make sure you didn’t hurt yourself further.” Rick argued. “So let me help you get out of those clothes then I’ll wait outside while you shower.”

Daryl glared, shaking his head stubbornly. “I can do it.”

“You can stretch that far down without falling over?” Rick asked, tone obviously confident the answer would be no.

“I’ll figure it out.” Daryl mumbled.

Rick sighed quietly. “Just let me help you.”

Daryl shifted from foot to foot a bit anxiously, not meeting Rick’s eyes.

“How about this?” Rick offered. “Turn your back if you’re so worried. I’m not going to be a perv and sneak a peek, man.”

“No.” Daryl shook his head quickly.

“God, you’re stubborn.” Rick groaned, rubbing his face irritably. “What do you have to hide?”

Daryl hesitated before licking his lips a bit and speaking. “Told you my old man was a normal alpha... threw a punch without thinking.”

“Yeah.” Rick nodded. “what does that_”

“Fist wasn’t the only thing he liked to hit with.” Daryl interrupted, not raising his gaze from the floor.

Rick’s eyes softened and he looked over the younger man. Daryl looked so young now... more like a scared child than the hardened man he showed to the world.

“You have scars.” Rick voiced quietly. “Daryl, I would never shame you for what you’ve survived. All we’ve gone through in just the short time of knowing each other? It’s a lifetime of crazy. Scars are the way to show we’re still alive. That we survived what life threw at us. You just survived more than most folks.”

Daryl didn't lift his head, but he did drop his arms to his sides.

Rick stepped closer, gently putting a hand on either side of Daryl and carefully began unfastening Daryl's belt and jeans. He looked uncomfortable, but Rick knew better than to comment on that. Daryl was already giving in a lot here.

Rick worked slowly, kneeling down and helping Daryl step out of his boots one by one before removing the rest of his clothing.

"There, that wasn't too hard." Rick smiled comfortingly and true to his word, his eyes never left Daryl's face. "I'm gonna get these to Carol. We'll see if she can get the stains out and stitch up the little tears."

"Just clothes, man. Ain't too worried 'bout looking pretty."

Rick shrugged, "If you'd rather then that's fine."

He looked down at Daryl's side, looking over the fresh stitches on his side with a sigh. Daryl deserved better than the hard hand he'd been dealt in life.

He deserved a happy life, where he hunted for fun and because he wanted the fresh meat, not because he feared starvation. He deserved a home where he could have pups and a mate. Hell, a couple dogs even if he wanted them. He shouldn't be afraid. *Ever.*

I could give him that... Rick thought absently, his hands moving to rest on Daryl's hips, his thumb gently running under the new stitching. There was plenty of bruising spreading, likely from the fall Daryl explained he took.

"Rick..." Daryl said softly, stiffening under the touches. *It wasn't fearful... it wasn't angry... It was hesitant but maybe even... a little excited?*

Rick took a deep breath, trying to make himself focus. It had the opposite effect. The scent of Daryl flooded his mind, making Rick dizzy with the feeling. The warm comforting scent was still there, but now there was more trickling in... something sweet that reminded Rick vaguely of apple pie...

It was some primal instinct, something in his chest desperately reaching out for Daryl in a way he couldn't understand. Like the world had been in black and white up until now and here, looking at Daryl in a dimly lit little bathroom with only a small window leaving them light, he was finally seeing in color.

"Rick." Daryl said again, lifting his gaze to look him in the eye.

Rick wasn't sure which one of them moved first, but their lips were crushing together in a heated kiss. Within a few seconds they had found a rhythm, Rick's fingers curling in Daryl's hair and his other hand curling his fingers around Daryl's bare hip to keep him close.

Daryl's arms were around Rick's neck, holding him close while Daryl stood more on his toes, almost like he was trying to get the upper hand in their kiss. That trick doesn't help too much when you're the same height though.

Rick pulled back to breathe, though his lips never left Daryl, pressing along his jawline before moving down his throat. The smell of unadulterated Daryl was strongest here, closest to the small scent gland below his ear that only omegas had.

Rick's mouth watered and his jaw ached, ready to bite down... *to claim...*

Rick was pushed away then, his back slamming into the sink behind him. It was enough to snap him out of his haze.

Daryl was pressed back against the wall, breathing hard. His eyes were wide and hazy, like Rick was sure his own were. Rick didn't have to look down to figure out that they were both equally aroused, both hating that Daryl had pushed him away. His nostrils flared in reaction to the warm cinnamon like scent Rick was coming to realize came from Daryl's arousal.

"You need to go." Daryl said quietly, shaking his head. "You... you gotta get outta here. 'fore you do something you regret."

Rick swallowed thickly, nodding slowly. "Yeah, I'll, uh, I'll wait outside for you to shower."

"I'm fine." Daryl shook his head quickly. "I'll go back to the room like I'm 'sposed to when I'm done."

Rick nodded quickly, stepping toward the door and leaving. "Daryl, I'm sorry." He didn't wait for a response before leaving the bathroom and closing the door behind him.

Chapter 4: Season 2 After Episode 5

Daryl had gotten tired of being in the house even before nightfall. He'd waited until Hershel's family sat down for dinner before making his exit. Before he stepped out the door, he offered a mumbled thanks to Hershel before walking out. The farm was dark and quiet, with only the camp fire that Rick's group was sitting around and laughing.

Daryl felt a clench in his chest, seeing Rick sitting beside Lori and Carl. It felt wrong and confusing... Like the Rick Daryl had seen in the bathroom earlier, the one with that gleam in his eyes that showed he was an alpha... That wasn't this one. They were two different men.

The one by the fire was a husband, a father. A good man who had gone through hell to get his family back. He was the one who'd lived the normal life before the end. He was the Rick that was going to keep going, to live a long life with his wife and son...

"Daryl?" It was a quiet call, from just a few feet away.

Daryl jumped a little at the call, surprised more by someone sneaking up on him than the fact that someone had actually done it.

And of course, it was Rick... *it had to be Rick, didn't it?*

"Shh..." Rick held a finger to his lips. "I didn't mean to spook you. Just didn't want to talk in front of everyone."

"Talk about what?" Daryl asked softly.

"I want us to decide what happens next." Rick explained. "I, uh, I broke down your tent for you, moved it over by that old burned out fire place." He gestured toward the building. "I thought it was far enough you'd feel safe, but, still be where we could get to you, or vice versa."

Daryl thought he should be surprised, but for some reason... he just wasn't. Of course Rick would go ahead and move his stuff for him. Rick may not speak his emotions well, but he could show them.

"You move my bike?" Daryl asked, looking over toward the fire again.

"I left it over by the cars." Rick chuckled. "I don't know a thing about motorcycles. I figured it was better I not screw with it."

Daryl nodded, a small smile on his face in the dark. "Probably a good idea."

"Daryl, about earlier..." Rick said softly.

"For a guy bad at feelings, you sure do wanna talk about 'em a lot." Daryl mumbled.

“I never lose control like I have with you.” Rick said softly. “Twice now. Daryl, I think we need to talk about what happened. Because it might mean_”

“It means what, Rick?” Daryl growled. “Means you’re a normal alpha. You got an omega close, one you can get your hands on and your dick is wanting to take the dive. It ain’t happening.”

“Daryl, I have never once looked at a man with any kind of want.” Rick explained quietly. “And like I told you before... you’re not a normal omega. I... I can’t stand most of them. You though, you make my brain go haywire. Like, like there’s the me that I show the world, and then... then there’s the me that comes out around you.”

Daryl faltered, looking away, from Rick, from the fire. *How could Rick so easily voice this kind of thing? He was married. He had a kid. Had everything an alpha could ask for... Why would he want Daryl? Unless...*

“No.” Daryl said softly, shaking his head. “We... we ain’t like that.”

“What if we are?” Rick asked softly. “Folks used to bump into their mates on the sidewalk, getting coffee in the morning. Is it really so weird to think it’ll still happen during all this?”

“Why wasn’t it a problem from the start?” Daryl asked. “Why’s this coming out today?”

“I think it was that implant you had.” Rick said quietly. “It was dulling your scent... blocking your hormones. I told you before... I would catch that scent... that smell of *home*. I’d notice it at random times, usually once my head stopped stressing about every day. At the CDC, we were safe... we were clean. Had nothing to blame it on, ‘cept the truth.”

“Fuck, Rick.” Daryl groaned, covering his face with his hands. “You can’t spring this shit on a guy.”

“Then what do we do about it?” Rick asked quietly, reaching out hesitantly to put a hand on Daryl’s shoulder.

Daryl wanted to pull away, but his body decided otherwise, staying under Rick’s touch to accept the comfort.

“You’re married. With a kid.” Daryl pointed out softly.

“Yeah, I am.” Rick sighed, pulling away.

Daryl shook his head, sighing heavily. “I’m headed to my spot. Going to camp out in my quiet corner of the farm... figure shit out.”

“Daryl...” Rick hesitated.

“No.” Daryl shook his head. “We ain’t talking about all this shit. Go back to your family.”

“Daryl_”

“No!” Daryl snapped, the first time he’s raised his voice above a whisper since the conversation began. It made his head ache. *No shouting for a while, dumbass.*

The group startled over by the fire and Rick held up a hand to reassure them nothing was wrong.

“We ain’t discussin’ this. There’s nothing to talk about.” Daryl shook his head, turning to walk to the spot Rick had pointed to.

He was not going to discuss this whole mating thing. Not right now. *Hell, not during all of this.* The world went to shit, and Rick is all gung-ho to get mated up like it was some magical thing.

The way Daryl saw it? It was signing up to be some alpha’s glorified baby maker. And Rick already had a wife who seemed plenty good at that herself.

Sleeping around a bit when she thought her husband was dead? Rick would forgive that easily, especially since it was Shane. His best friend. *Hell, probably strengthened their alpha brotherhood or some shit.*

Daryl unzipped his tent, climbing inside the dark shell and zipping it closed again. His bag was there, like a pillow, with his sleeping bag and an extra blanket from the RV Rick had brought him.

“Fucking Rick.” Daryl mumbled. “Doing all kinds of alpha bullshit.”

Not even to himself would he voice how much it warmed his heart to know that Rick had gone to the trouble to set his things up like this... to give him an extra blanket to keep him warm through the night.

Daryl crawled into his sleeping bag and pulled the blanket around him, his nose flaring at the smell on it. It wasn’t just a spare blanket... *It was the blanket that had been in Rick’s tent.*

“How’d he get his wife to agree to handing that over?” Daryl mumbled. But he probably hadn’t. He would have just traded the blankets out quietly, knowing Lori wouldn’t care about what blanket was on their bed as long as they stayed warm.

But Rick, *damn Rick...* he’d know that the blanket... *covered in the smell of alpha... In the smell of Rick...* it would make the conversation they had earlier stick in his mind even more than it already was.

“Clever fucking cop.” Daryl mumbled before burying his face in the warm blanket.

Chapter 5: Season 2 Episode 6

Being back in his own quiet tent was a great relief for Daryl. Staying in the house, surrounded by people was nerve wracking. Especially with Rick pacing around, looking in on his son constantly and going upstairs to see Daryl.

Since Daryl had come back and gotten shot, Rick had been anxiously looking in on him. *Constantly.*

And after what happened in the bathroom... Daryl needed some damn room to think.

Shit, speaking of Rick...

"Hey Daryl." Came the soft accented voice from just outside the tent Daryl was laying in.

"You gonna climb out my ass any time soon?" Daryl groaned, looking over at Rick.

"Probably not." He said apologetically. "I can't help it. With you hurt, my brain is over protective."

"I'm fine." Daryl insisted, gesturing up to his bandaged head. "Flesh wound, remember?"

"I'm more worried about your side." Rick admitted. "You were so pale when you came back yesterday... I thought you were a walker. I just... I couldn't imagine having to _"

Daryl interrupted him, shaking his head. "I'm alive, man. And I'm fine. No excuse for you to shoot me any time soon." The last thing he wanted was for Rick to get all emotional. Daryl was not equipped for his own emotions, much less Rick's.

"Daryl, you don't understand..." Rick whispered, carefully climbing into the tent and sitting beside him, just a few inches away from Daryl. "The thought of you being gone before I can..."

Daryl rolled his eyes. "Man, stop. I said I was fine, I'm fine. I ain't your kid or your wife. You ain't gotta be climbing my ass like this."

"Daryl, you're more than either of those." Rick reminded softly.

"Ain't your mate 'til we fuck." Daryl mumbled, looking down at his hands. *Man, he hated this talk last the first time they had it...*

"Then do me a favor." Rick offered. "Look me in the eye. Look me straight in my eyes and tell me honestly that you don't feel it. That you can't feel the same pull I do. That it's not why we kissed before."

Daryl swallowed hard and lifted his gaze to meet Rick's soft blue eyes. Like always, his stomach clenched, his heart lurching into his throat and his mouth going dry. Every instinct he had inside told him to be honest, to tell Rick he felt it constantly. That seeing Lori touch Rick made Daryl want to break her arms, that seeing Rick with Carl made Daryl ache to be the one to have a little one for Rick to spoil and love like that.

"Rick..." Daryl started, though his voice caught in his throat. He couldn't lie, not to Rick. *Especially not about this.*

"You're *married*." Daryl whispered, trying to change the focus. *That was true.*

"Wouldn't be the first time a couple got divorced because one found their mate." Rick pointed out.

Mate... Hell, Rick said that so easily. Said it like it was natural. *Like it was already set in stone.*

"Carl needs his parents." Daryl insisted.

"I won't make Lori leave the group just because you and me are together." Rick chuckled softly. "I'll still take care of her and Carl all the same. I'd just, I'd take care of you too."

Daryl swallowed thickly, wringing his fingers uncomfortably. "I don't... I've never even liked being like this. Never had a reason not to be scared of it."

"You're an omega." Rick said softly, causing Daryl to cringe. "And I'm *your* alpha. I was born to protect you and take care of you in every way. I'd never push you into mating. I've told you that before when we have this conversation. But I want an answer. I *need* one."

"Gimme time." Daryl whispered. "Let me find Carol's little girl. Let's find out if Hershel's gonna throw us out on our asses at any moment or not."

Rick nodded. "Of course, Daryl. Just, promise you'll think about it?"

"Yeah..." Daryl said softly, not looking at him. "I'll think it through."

Rick smiled, and *boy, if that wasn't the most beautiful sight in the world.*

"Thank you, Daryl." Rick sighed happily, reaching a hand out and gently touching Daryl's. "I don't think you know how much that means to me."

"You want this that bad, huh?" Daryl asked softly.

"Ever since the CDC... that kiss. And then after you came back..." Rick whispered. "My chest hurts when I'm around you. Like my whole body is saying I need you. Feels like a bad drug habit or something."

"I know the feeling." Daryl said softly, looking up at him again.

Rick gave another smile, this one sad and apologetic. "If I could stop it, I would. I'd hold it all myself and let you keep going without ever thinking about me."

"Could've got stuck with a worse alpha, I guess." Daryl mumbled. "Could've had one like Shane."

Rick let out a short laugh. "That wouldn't be a good match for you. You've got too much heart for that."

"You think you're a good match?" Daryl asked curiously.

"I don't know... but I really hope I am." Rick admitted quietly.

"I ain't gonna have a litter of kids." Daryl warned. "And I ain't gonna just follow you around with my tail 'tween my legs."

"I'd never want that from you. I want Daryl," Rick assured. "And kids... kids aren't a deal breaker for me. If you never want them, we won't have them."

Daryl nodded slowly. "Alright, then. Once we find Sophia, you and me can... we can work this out."

Rick smiled wide, squeezing Daryl's hand. Daryl hadn't even realized he was still holding it. *Just felt so natural.* "Thank you, Daryl."

"Ain't gotta make such a big deal about it." Daryl mumbled, pulling his hand away. His cheeks and neck were starting to feel warm with a blush.

"It is a big deal." Rick insisted. "And I think letting Carl see an alpha taking care of their omega, actually treating 'em right and things like that. It'll help him be better as a person in the long run."

"Makes sense." Daryl agreed quietly, scratching absently at his cheek.

Rick nodded, looking around the small tent absently. "So, what did Andrea bring you to read?"

"Some shit book o' Dale's. I dunno." Daryl shrugged.

"Didn't know you even liked to read." Rick chuckled.

Daryl felt his lip twitch with the start of a smile. "Yeah, I'm full of surprises."

"I bet you are." Rick smiled fondly.

Chapter 6: Season 2 After Episode 6

Chapter Summary

Finally putting that E rating to good use! I try really hard to find a balance between good communication and the ABO typical "instinct overwhelms" thing. Don't know how successful I was.

After the fight with Lori, Rick was a mess, his mind a dizzy blur. His wife was pregnant... and the baby wasn't his. No matter what she would insist. He knew... Rick knew it was Shane's. In his gut, he knew it.

So Rick went to the only place that his mind could focus on. The one place he knew he could breathe.

He went to find Daryl.

Rick found the omega outside his tent, sitting pressed up against the shed and sharpening a stick.

"Daryl." Rick whispered, his breathing feeling a little bit easier just being closer to the man. Daryl gave him something to focus on, something good and not the swirling insanity in his own mind.

Daryl lifted his head, his eyes meeting Rick's for only a second before he set aside his work. "You look like hell."

Rick laughed dryly, sinking down into a crouch and covering his mouth with his hands as he tried to draw in deep breathes so he could speak and focus.

"Lori... she's pregnant." Rick explained softly.

Daryl's expression flashed with something Rick couldn't recognize but it faded just as quickly as it came, and he nodded. "Congratulations, man."

Rick barked out a hoarse and humorless laugh. "It's not mine. It's, *god*, It's Shane's. My wife, is *pregnant* with my best friend's baby."

Hysterical laughter began to bubble out of his lips until it was nearly gasping.

"Hey, hey." Daryl panicked, rushing over and putting his hands on either side of Rick's face to make him focus.

“Breathe, man. Breathe for me.” Daryl whispered, his eyes wide and anxious. Rick hated seeing Daryl so concerned, especially not because of him.

Rick wheezed once or twice before he managed to take a deep breath. He felt dizzy with the sudden rush of oxygen and fell forward, pushing Daryl onto his back in the grass in the process.

Daryl gave an oof at the sudden feeling and looked up at him, his eyes softening as he gently ran his finger through Rick’s short curls. “Breathe, Rick...”

Rick had never realized how bright Daryl’s eyes. All the time he spent staring at Daryl and he never paid attention to his eyes... that needed to change.

Rick’s breathing slowed down gradually, his world seemingly shrinking down to just the face inches from his own. Daryl was slowly coming more into focus, like seeing a lighthouse when the storm is roaring around you. *A safe port for the storm...*

Despite himself, Rick’s mind started thinking and before he knew it, he was speaking.

“You said we couldn’t do any of this because I was married.” Rick whispered, shifting so that he could hold himself up on one hand beside Daryl’s head.

“Y-yeah...” Daryl nodded, swallowing visibly.

“Daryl,” Rick breathed his name, leaning forward and pressing his forehead against Daryl’s. It was such a comforting touch. Just a small and innocent intimacy that pulling away feel like the worst idea in the whole world.

“You’re hurting, Rick.” Daryl whispered. “You’re just pissed off at her.”

“Why are you still so hesitant? Why can’t I keep you?” Rick asked in confusion, his expression twisting with hurt. His rational mind would know that this was Daryl trying to help, but god, Rick felt so much hurt right now. His chest ached and it felt like his salvation was right there, right under him.

“Because I don’t wanna be a bad choice you made ‘cause you were pissed at Lori.” Daryl responded quietly, turning his head to the side and trying to look away from Rick.

Rick wasn’t swayed though and leaned down, pressing hot and impatient open mouthed kisses down the side of Daryl’s neck.

The omega gasped, a soft but sharp sound that shot straight through Rick.

“Rick...” Daryl rasped, his fingers slipping down to Rick’s chest and curling in the material of his shirt.

“Don’t go.” Rick pleaded, his breath spreading goosebumps over Daryl’s wet skin. “Please. It doesn’t have to be anything else... just this. Just... let me be close.”

Daryl’s face twisted briefly before he relented, giving a quick nod of permission.

A breathless laugh escaped Rick and he latched on again, sucking a deep mark on the spot above the collar of Daryl's shirt.

Daryl's breathing was getting heavier and he shifted so that his legs were stretched out around Rick.

Rick moaned, moving up to nip at the small spot behind Daryl's ear. The younger's full body stiffened, his head falling back and his back arching slightly.

"Not there." Daryl rasped. "N-not... not that."

Rick's hazy mind took a few seconds before he remembered why Daryl was protecting such a strange spot.

Because omegas had a scent gland located from behind the ear to just below the jawline. One little biological difference that meant so much. An alpha biting down and breaking the skin there during sex... *during a knot*...

"Not yet." Rick assured, moving his hands down Daryl's chest to lift the bottom of his shirt and push it up to expose his stomach.

There was still bruising from the arrow in his side, but the stitches seemed to be healing well. Rick would have to remember to get a good look later because he quickly became distracted by the beads of sweat standing on Daryl's stomach, the muscles there quivering in the cooling evening air.

Rick leaned in on instinct, running his tongue across the smooth planes of skin and collecting the taste of his *_not yet_* mate.

A low almost animalistic groan escaped his lips, and he had to take in a sharp breath to avoid dizziness.

But that's when he realized it... that smell. Sweet and spicy... Cinnamon. That was the only thing that came even close to describing it.

He'd noticed it before in the bathroom before Daryl pushed him away. His mouth watered and his nose instantly went to work trying to find the source.

"R-rick," Daryl whispered, his breathing getting shakier.

Rick was distracted, his nose leading him to between Daryl's legs which spread easily with just a light touch.

Low between Daryl's legs, wetness was spreading and it was full of that sweet smell.

As the alpha in his mind registered what it was, a low throaty moan ripped its way from his lips.

"*Daryl...*"

“Don’t.” The omega said sharply, his cheeks flushed and his breathing still too fast for the words to carry any heat.

“Are you...” Rick licked his lips, fighting the desperate urge to sink down between those long legs and just feast. “Is this a heat?”

Daryl nodded jerkily, looking down at him almost embarrassed. “Been trying to flare up all day... got worse soon as you...”

Rick let out a breathy sigh, bringing his hand down to rest on Daryl’s bare stomach. He had to fight the urge to reach between Daryl’s legs. Between curiosity and want, he was nearly buzzing.

“You smell so good, sugar.” Rick whispered in awe, licking his lips again. “Are you... you hurting or, or anything like that?”

Thankfully, Rick’s rational side perked up again, his mind repeating the symptoms Hershel has listed off earlier. None of those had seemed anywhere near as amazing as what Rick was currently seeing and feeling.

Daryl is mine. Have to protect...

“Hurts a little.” Daryl admitted. “Like a sore muscle... and, I’m...” His cheeks flushed a brilliant shade of red. “I’m horny as hell.”

“I could tell.” Rick nodded quickly, looking up at Daryl. “Tell me how to help.”

“I-I don’t know.” Daryl admitted. “I ain’t exactly an expert on this shit.”

“Will you let me help?” Rick asked quietly, looking up at him. “If you say no, I’ll... I’ll leave. It’ll hurt like hell, but I’ll leave.”

“You don’t have to go.” He whispered, biting his bottom lip nervously. “But, I don’t... I don’t want to_”

“If you don’t want to have sex, there are other ways I can help you cool down.” Rick assured, standing up and pulling Daryl to his feet with him. “I’ll stay fully clothed if it makes you more comfortable. But... I want to... I feel like I *need to*, take care of you. After today... even more than before. I just need to take care of you.”

He knew he was repeating himself, but he couldn’t think of anything else. He wanted to take care of his omega, even if he couldn’t claim him yet. The whole world was going to shit around him. But Rick could control this. He could protect Daryl and soothe the aches nature was cursing him with.

Daryl nodded in agreement, standing slowly. After a moment, he grabbed Rick’s arm and started to pull him toward the tent. “Not out here though.”

“Yeah, of course.” Rick assured, opening the tent and stepping inside with Daryl. He was buzzing with excitement while Daryl zipped the tent closed.

As soon as Daryl turned around, Rick had him pulled into a deep kiss, his fingers curled tightly around Daryl's hips and pressing their hips closely together.

Daryl whined low in his throat, his hands clenching tightly at Rick's back.

Rick managed to pull his lips away just enough to speak, panting between words. "Is sex your only limit? Because I gotta be honest, sugar... all I can think about is getting down between your legs."

Daryl's breath hitched and he nodded jerkily, reaching around impatiently to pull Rick's hands to the front of his jeans. "Do it then."

The same alpha growl from earlier reared its head again and Rick had those jeans pulled down to Daryl's knees and Daryl on his back in record time.

"Sorry." Rick panted softly. "Usually I'm a lot gentler. But... *god*, you make me crazy."

"You act like I complained." Daryl rasped, looking up at him. Rick couldn't think of the last time he felt this level of want.

He looked down, his eyes landing on Daryl's newly exposed erection. The head was a gorgeous cherry red and was already oozing plenty. And down his thighs dripped more and more of that sweet slick.

Rick tore off Daryl's boots before his jeans followed. As soon as the restrictive clothes were out of the way, Rick grabbed Daryl under each knee and lifted his legs high to reveal his ass.

And my god, was it a thing of beauty. The shiny slick covered him from taint back, coating his hole in the sticky fluid.

And that wasn't even the best part. No, that would be the way Daryl's puckered little entrance seemed like it was desperate squeezing, like it was trying to coax Rick in. It was already red and puffy, looking like he'd already gone a few rounds before Rick ever got his hands on Daryl.

"You look so good like this." Rick whispered, sinking down between his legs and slowly licking away the slick that had spilled down his thighs.

Rick had never been one for oral sex. It felt messy and a bit tiring. With Daryl, he relished the mess and the knowledge that his jaw would ache terribly later.

Daryl was taking shaky breathes, nothing above a whisper had escaped his mouth so far, unlike Rick who had only progressively gotten louder and hungrier.

Finally, he reached his goal, going to town between Daryl's cheeks. He alternated between quick flicks and jabs and long slow licks. He was feeling delirious, like he was quickly becoming addicted to the taste of Daryl.

Rick might not have much experience eating out, even less doing it to ass, but Daryl's delicious sounds were some of the best encouragement he could have ever asked for.

“Rick,” Daryl moaned softly, chewing his bottom lip and clenching his eyes tightly.

His breathing got faster, catching in his throat after few seconds before he let out one hoarse cry and his whole body shuddered.

Dimly Rick realized Daryl had come but his mind was so absorbed in this moment, in the sweetness coating his tongue, the occasional gush of pure honey his mate was giving all for him.

Daryl started to squirm, shuddering and tugging at Rick’s hair. “Gimme a break, man. Fuck, ‘m sensitive.”

Rick poked his head up and smiled sheepishly. “Sorry, sugar. You just... god, you taste so damn good.” He kissed Daryl’s lower stomach, enjoying the wet smack his sticky lips made when he pulled away.

“M god.” Daryl moaned miserably, his hand moving down past Rick to squeeze his own cock which had yet to soften even after one orgasm.

“You need more, sugar?” Rick whispered, kissing a line eagerly up his chest before pressing their lips together in a gentle kiss. He was trying to show the less animalistic part of himself. Daryl deserved the best.

Daryl’s mouth tasted like cigarette smoke and mint. Not like peppermint, but like fresh wild mint. That mixed with the liquid gold Rick’s senses were full of had the alpha grinding down against the ground just for some friction on his straining erection.

“Y-Yes.” Daryl whined quietly, trying to turn his face away. *He’s embarrassed... it’s, it’s so cute.*

“Look at me.” Rick growled, swatting Daryl’s hand away from his cock. The alpha in his mind was pacing and he couldn’t help the words escaping him. “You don’t get to touch this, do you understand? And you don’t get to hide your face. I want to see you. I want to hear you.”

Daryl’s eyes were dark and hazy, hardly any of their pretty icy blue visible around the wide black of the pupil. Despite that he nodded and met Rick’s eyes steadily. *Like an eager and obedient omega...*

“Good boy.” Rick praised, moving to wrap Daryl’s legs around his sides and bringing one hand down to start toying with Daryl’s entrance. Just the outside felt so well stretched and eager, it made Rick briefly wonder how many times Daryl had done this.

“Just you.” Daryl answered out loud, answering the question Rick hadn’t realized he’d asked outside of his mind, panting hard with heavy lidded eyes. “You’re my first alpha.”

“And only.” Rick said firmly. “The only alpha you’ll ever need. Wait until I get to fuck you. You’ll be spoiled for anyone else. Won’t be able to take anyone else ever again.”

Daryl squirmed hard, more slick spilling onto Rick’s fingers.

“Goddamn.” Rick breathed in awe, using the slick as a way to coat his fingers and press two slowly inside of him.

Daryl may have looked wrecked on the outside but that wasn’t reflected on the inside. He was so tight and hot on the inside, his inner muscles coaxing and squeezing Rick’s fingers like it was a cock ready to spill inside for him.

Rick curled his fingers a bit, managing to begin grazing Daryl’s sweet spot.

That’s what finally drew the louder noises from Daryl, the moans turning into whimpers and gasps. *Who is Rick to ignore such a beautiful request?*

Rick pushed in a third finger about the time he wrapped his other hand around Daryl’s cock and starting stroking him in time with his thrusting fingers.

Daryl squirmed hard, turning his head to the side and biting his bottom lip. *He’s trying to hide his face again...*

Rick flicked his wrist sharply once when he reached the head on one stroke and Daryl gasped sharply, his hips jerking with each spurt of his second orgasm.

“Fuck, *fuck...*” Daryl panted hard, bringing his hand up shakily to push his bangs off his face. “Fuck, *Rick.*”

“Yeah?” Rick asked, his voice rough and gravelly. He was entranced, the memory of Daryl’s face when orgasming was seared into his mind now. Even if this was the only time he ever got to touch Daryl, he would have a lifetime of fantasizing stored up now.

“Think you got one more for me, sugar?” Rick asked, leaning up to kiss over his neck and up to his ear.

Daryl shook his head quickly, swatting at Rick’s hands weakly. “N-need a break, Rick. Ain’t a teenager.”

“You’re right.” Rick agreed, curling the fingers still inside Daryl and earning a sharp cry from the younger man. “But you are an omega in heat. And you’re still hard for me. I think you can manage one more.”

Daryl worried his bottom lip between his teeth before looking up at Rick, speaking quietly. “You could... if you still want to?”

Rick dropped his hands to his sides in shock, his eyes wide as he tried to process the offer. “Are you sure? You said you didn’t want to. I-I don’t want to push...”

“Yeah, I changed my mind.” Daryl rolled his eyes, the defiant gesture at odds with the nervous energy around him. “Now get on me before I change it back.”

Despite that, Rick nodded quickly, wiping his hand off on his jeans and tugging his shirt over his head.

His hands went down to unbuckle his belt and open his jeans, his eyes never leaving his omega's.

Daryl's eyes returned to their dark and glazed haze from before, focused on Rick's hands intently as they moved. "Yeah... yeah, I'm sure."

Rick stood up to kick off his boots and pants, dropping back between Daryl's legs once he was naked. In the time that took him, Daryl had pulled his shirt up and off.

"Want to roll over?" Rick offered. "Might be easier on you."

His hand absently moved down, squeezing the throbbing swelling at the base of his cock. His knot had filled a few times in his past, usually during masturbation as a teen. Lori has always been uncomfortable when it began to swell during sex and would pull away, leaving nothing but a sore bruising ache and lack of true satisfaction.

But now... with the heavy manner of Daryl was breathing and the way his legs spread eagerly... Rick for once was very grateful he had this to offer.

"No." Daryl shook his head. "I want... want to be like this."

Rick nodded, shifting down to kiss Daryl lovingly, bumping their noses together. "Just, remember... you can change your mind if you need to. And, I won't bite unless you ask. This can just be a friend helping you out." He prayed to whatever god might be listening that Daryl wouldn't change his mind. That Rick would be able to claim and love his omega, protect him from the world, but he also knew Daryl was skittish. And he was making a conscious effort to respect that.

"I know." Daryl nodded, reaching down and wrapping his fingers around Rick's cock. He shivered, biting his bottom lip and nodding again more eagerly. "Yeah, c-c'mon."

His hand slipped away easily and he brought his arms up to wrap around Rick's neck.

Rick pressed his lips to Daryl's again quickly, using one hand to line up and his other to hold Daryl's hip as he pushed in slowly.

"Oh my_ fuck, *Daryl*." Rick gasped, slumping forward and pressing his forehead against Daryl's chest.

If the heat had been exciting around his fingers, this was overwhelming. Daryl was like a bonfire and Rick was so happy to be swallowed up in its flames.

"God, Rick..." Daryl moaned, his nails digging into Rick's back. "*Please...*"

That one strangled word almost broke Rick, his knot physically throbbed from it.

"Give me a second, sugar." Rick whispered, shaking his head. "Give me... fuck, you're so tight... 'm not hurting you, am I?"

Daryl shook his head several times quickly. "God no. Fuck no. Feels... feels *so good*."

Rick rolled his hips forward once to test the feeling before nodding to himself and starting a slow but steady pace.

“Rick...” Daryl complained, his legs tensing on either side of the alpha’s hips. “*Faster.*”

“Sugar, if I go too fast, this isn’t gonna last long.” Rick chuckled, pulling out to just the head before slamming forward once just to test how truthful that was.

He pressed his face against Daryl’s shoulder to stifle a moan, starting to rock his hips more steadily again.

“Don’t gotta be long.” Daryl rasped. “Just need it to happen.”

Rick nodded in understand, promising himself that he’d take his time and treat Daryl right soon. Once he had calmed down a little and had some rational thought again.

Rick moved his hands to Daryl’s hips and pulled out almost fully again before starting the fast and hard pace his mate craved.

Daryl yelped a bit, holding Rick impossibly closer. “Fuck!”

“Better?” Rick asked against his ear, panting.

“So much.” Daryl moaned. “God, so good.”

Rick curled one hand in Daryl’s hair, clenching tightly while he focused on leaving marks all over Daryl’s neck.

As he’d worried, it didn’t take long before each thrust was getting harder, the rim of Daryl’s entrance clenching around the forming knot.

Daryl’s eyes were screwed shut, his short bitten finger nails leaving crescent shaped marks on either side of Rick’s spine.

“Gotta focus for a second, sugar.” Rick panted, lifting his head away from the lovely bruise he’d been sucking into Daryl’s skin.

Daryl slowly peeled his eyes open, groaning in the back of his throat. “Wha’?”

“Can I keep you?” Rick asked, moving his hand to grab Daryl’s chin and pulling the younger man’s focus back to him when his head tried to roll back.

“Yes.” Daryl whispered, one of his hands dropping from Rick’s back to try and wiggle between them.

“Louder.” Rick growled, grabbing Daryl by his wrist and dragging the arm over his head.

“Yes!” Daryl exclaimed, looking at him deeply and nodding fast. “God, yes, Rick!”

Rick nodded, dropping his face back to Daryl's neck and finding that swollen gland with his tongue. He managed one last thrust before he was stuck firmly inside his mate and bit down hard on the spot, blood painting his tongue and running out past his lips.

Daryl screamed, the first time Rick's heard Daryl's voice so loud since losing Merle. The younger man tossed his head, or attempted to at least but Rick hadn't let go yet.

Rick's hips continued to rock through the first throws of his orgasm, his teeth slowly loosening their grip on Daryl's soft flesh.

Daryl was limp against the sleeping bag he was on top of, breathing heavily but looking more peaceful than any man had any right to.

"Fuck, Daryl." Rick whispered, collapsing on top of him in exhaustion.

"You just did." Daryl mumbled, blinking heavy eyes slowly.

"Yeah, we did." He nodded in agreement, gently licking the bite mark clean. It would scar, it was meant to after all, but it would stop bleeding soon enough.

Daryl shivered, shifting his hips a bit and pulling against Rick's knot. "Fuck... feels so full already..."

"We're awful lucky rut doesn't happen like this." He nodded, petting Daryl's sweaty hair. "Heard alphas can come for hours during that."

Daryl shuddered. "Mean while they're knotted in?"

Rick nodded. "Yeah, keep pumping their omega full either until they're pregnant or the alpha doesn't have a drop left in him."

"That's terrifying." Daryl admitted softly.

"Ruts are rare." Rick assured. "One in every hundred alphas does it regularly. And all the others'll do it once in a life time."

"You had yours yet?" Daryl asked curiously.

"Not yet." Rick shook his head. "Might never. I was a late bloomer."

"Just as well." Daryl sighed, pushing his hand between them and touching his own stomach. "Feels full just from one..."

Rick grinned wolfishly, a bit of alpha pride swelling up in his chest. His mate felt full from *one knot? Imagine how stuffed he'd feel during a rut...*

"You'd look pregnant if I ever had a rut." Rick whispered in awe, lifting himself up enough to rub Daryl's stomach.

"Told you I ain't having kids." Daryl reminded stubbornly.

“I know.” Rick assured. “That’s why the picture is so incredible. It won’t be real, but it’s nice to picture. I can’t help it.”

Daryl huffed a bit but didn’t protest, instead asking quietly. “You really would be okay if we never...”

“Had kids?” Rick finished for him. “Yes. I’ve got Carl. Would I like to see little Dixon pups running around? Yes. Would I love to see you growing our pup? *Hell yes*. Will I push for it? *No, never*. It’s your body. And if you don’t want to do it, we don’t do it.”

Daryl’s eyes softened and the corner of his lips twitched slightly. “Thank you, Rick...”

“Of course.” Rick assured, leaning up to kiss his forehead. “Now get some rest, darling. Need you rested up if another round hits.”

Daryl nodded, closing his eyes gladly. “Hey, Rick?”

“Yeah, Daryl?” Rick murmured, rolling them onto their sides so that Daryl could stretch one leg out even though the other had to stay hooked over his hip.

“How am I supposed to clean all this shit up without everyone seeing?” Daryl asked.

“We’ll figure it out later.” Rick assured. “I’ll get you cleaned up.”

“Mmkay.” Daryl yawned.

Chapter 7: Season 2 Episode 7

Rick left Daryl's tent early the next morning, grateful that it was a way away from the group so that he wasn't doing some sort of farm yard walk of shame. He hadn't wanted to leave the warm cocoon with Daryl at all, but he still had responsibilities.

Waking up next to him had been a dream... Daryl's face was softened in sleep, none of the stress of the daytime marring his features.

Daryl's lips parted slightly in his sleep, his breathing quietly and steady.

Even after Rick's knot had faded, they stayed close, occasionally sharing kisses or just resting their foreheads together. Rick just enjoyed being with Daryl.

Daryl... his mate. Rick felt like a giddy teenager just thinking that. Being mated... it was like having a second heartbeat echoing his own now. If he focused, he could feel a tether of sorts. Like a new weight around his heart that pulled tighter the further he got from Daryl.

He had to assume that would get easier to handle the longer they were mated.

He walked over to the camp fire, wincing a bit as he saw Lori sitting by the fire.

"Morning Rick," she said quietly, glancing up at him. There was a frown on her face, something obviously upset in her behavior.

She knows... That much was obvious. He wondered if it was something anyone would notice. Or if it was just because she had been married to him for well over a decade.

They'd been married since before they were twenty. High school sweethearts turned married with a child.

He'd expected to still feel guilt, to feel the weight of betraying Lori like he had before. Like he had every time he'd looked at Daryl since meeting him.

But today, that weight was gone. He felt free in a way he never had before.

"Good morning, Lori." Rick greeted in return, sitting across the fire from her.

"You didn't come to bed last night." She said softly, though her tone took on that edge of hers... like she expected a certain answer and she'd raise hell if he tried to answer with something different.

"Yeah, I slept somewhere else." Rick nodded.

"With someone else, you mean."

“Yeah, with someone else, Lori.” Rick sighed, rubbing the back of his neck. Lori took a deep breath, looking down at her clasped hands quietly. “Rick, we’re married. Am I supposed to be okay with you just sleeping with someone else?”

“Lori, you’re pregnant. With another man’s baby.” Rick pointed out quietly. He wasn’t trying to start a fight, just stating a fact. “You have no room for judgment right now.”

“You don’t know that.” She argued. “It could be yours. And even if it isn’t biologically, it’s yours as far as I’m concerned.”

“Well, maybe it should be Shane’s.” Rick sighed, looking at her pointedly. “Maybe that’s what you should be concerned with.”

“How can you say that?” She asked in disbelief, her eyes wide and shocked. Rick sighed, finally voicing the truth. “Because, Lori, I found my mate. My honest to god, made for me, mate.”

“What?” She whispered, his expression twisting in confusion. “How can you... how do you know that? Who is it? The group is all betas. Except for Carol. You weren’t with_”

“It wasn’t Carol.” Rick shook his head. “And she isn’t the only omega in our group.”

“Daryl?” She gasped, disgust painting her tone and expression. “You... Daryl Dixon? Rick, you must be wrong. That’s all it is. You’re confused. Because there’s no way that Daryl Dixon is your_”

“My mate?” Rick interrupted her. “My omega? My other half? My... mine.” The more Lori argued it, the more he felt confident in it. Any hint of fear that he’d been wrong faded. He knew that his mate was Daryl.

“You have a wife and son.” Lori gritted her teeth, changing tactics.

“I know.” Rick nodded. “And I won’t discard Carl. He’s still my son. And I won’t abandon you. I said my vows when we got married and I meant them. But... romantically, I’m sorry, Lori. But that’s gone. That part of me has been absent since... god, since the minute Daryl walked into my life.”

“You’re making a mistake.” She whispered. “Not only on what he is, but in leaving. You’ve never once been interested in men, Rick. Not once. I’ve known you your whole life!”

“It doesn’t matter what’s in his pants, Lori.” Rick sighed, feeling a bit frustrated now. Why was she making this so difficult?

“You don’t love him.” She insisted.

Rick took a deep breath. “Maybe not yet. I won’t call it love, but I need him. And I care about him more than I can say. Lori, please. Don’t make this harder than it has to be. I want us to be civil and decent for Carl’s sake, and because even before you’re my wife, you’re someone I care about. I want to walk out of this with a friendship intact.”

She sniffled a bit, shaking her head. “Rick, I don’t know if that’s possible right now.”

“It’ll take time.” Rick agreed. “But... I’m confident it can happen. I believe it can. I really do.”

“For Carl, I hope you’re right.” She sighed.

“Daryl!”

Daryl groaned softly, rubbing his face. Why can’t these people leave him alone for one damn day?

“Daryl?”

Again came the call of his name.

“Daryl, are you in here?” there was a light tapping on his tent, like knocking.

“Yeah?” Daryl sighed tiredly. “What d’ya want?”

“It’s... it’s Carl.”

Daryl recognized the voice now, lifting his head from his pillows. He hadn’t gotten dressed and out yet, too wrapped up in trying to understand the night before.

“Shit.” He mumbled before calling a little louder. “What is it, kid?”

“Uh, c-can I talk to you?” Carl asked, his shadow fidgeting outside the tent.

“Gimme a minute.” Daryl sighed, shoving off his blanket and pulling on his jeans and a button-up shirt before opening the tent and stepping out.

“What is it?” Daryl asked, stretching his arms over his head and looking down at the kid in front of him.

Carl looked up at him from under the brim of his too large hat, his eyes holding the same mix of nervousness and confidence that Rick’s eyes held.

Come to think of it... his eyes are the same color as his daddy’s too... Daryl had never looked close enough to notice before.

“I heard my mom and dad talking earlier this morning.” He explained, bouncing on his heels a bit. Like he had too much nervous energy.

“Folks talk all the time.” Daryl shrugged, crossing his arms over his chest.

“Well, they were talking about you.” Carl explained.

“Me?” Daryl asked in surprise. Shit, if they were talking about me... it was probably about me and Rick.

“They were talking about how you’re my dad’s mate.” Carl explained. “I don’t... I don’t really get what that means, but, they’re both kind of mad. I don’t think it’s a good idea to ask them about it.”

Daryl sighed, shaking his head. So, Lori and Rick had fought. About him. Shit.

“It’s, uh, one of them weird... biology things.” Daryl tried to explain. “Your dad and me, we’re... together now. Think that’s all that matters really.”

“Do you love my dad?” Carl asked curiously.

Daryl blinked slowly in surprise, shocked by the question. “I... I don’t know. All this... it’s new, y’know?”

“Is mates like being married?” Carl asked.

Daryl sighed, rubbing the back of his neck as he considered his words. “Kinda. Well, sorta. Like, it’s two folks that’re together, supposed to be forever. ‘Cept... mates are made to stay that way. Married folks can get divorced and shit.”

“I think my parents are going to get divorced.” Carl said softly, looking down and kicking the dirt with the tip of his boot.

“Dunno, man.” Daryl murmured.

“Even if you don’t love him... you care about my dad, right?” Carl asked, looking back up at him again.

“Yeah.” Daryl nodded. “I care about him a lot.”

Carl nodded in return. “You’ll look out for him, right? Keep him safe?”

“I’m gonna try.” Daryl promised.

Carl nodded again, seeming to be happy with that answer. “That’s important. And I think you guys will be good together. Just takes time though, right?”

“Right.” Daryl nodded.

Carl smiled, seeming more confident and happy than when he’d arrived. “Thanks.” Then he turned and walked away from Daryl’s little camp.

Chapter 8: Season 2 Episode 8

Chapter Summary

Takes place in the afternoon after the barn shooting and the early evening.

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for [notes](#)

“I just don’t understand why you would help him.” Rick said again, still frustrated, still stunned.

It was less than a day ago that he’d finally mated with Daryl, and he’d been drifting on Cloud 9 in the interim.

Sure, finding out about the walkers in the barn this morning had been shocking, but he had felt level headed and confident. He felt like they could face anything.

Coming back from the swamp with Hershel and Jimmy to find his mate standing beside *Shane* of all people with a gun drawn and aimed at the barn.

“Ain’t right having them things in there.” Daryl shrugged, looking at Rick pointedly. “You know it ain’t.”

“This is Hershel’s farm.” Rick explained, exasperated. “I was working with him. I was working it out.”

“Working it out is bringing more of ‘em in?” Daryl frowned, arms crossed over his chest. “Barn was already full to bustin’. And they coulda tore past you to get out. Or worse.”

Rick sighed heavily. “Daryl...”

“Carol would’ve never known where her daughter was.” Daryl said softly. “I’d have been out there in the morning again, looking for a little girl who been dead all along.”

Rick faltered, shocked by that notion. His mate had almost died looking for that little girl... *and he had been ready to go right back after her.*

“You could have died.” Rick whispered. The thought made him nauseous. The image from when Daryl had come home from his fall flooded his mind and morphed a bit to Daryl’s lovely eyes dead and bloodshot like the walkers... *that same snarl and stagger...*

“Looking for a dead girl.” Daryl nodded. “We’d have never known she was in there.”

“You could have died looking for her.” Rick repeated to himself, stuck on that simple fact now, instinctively stepping closer to Daryl.

Daryl stepped back quickly, looking a bit like a startled animal.

“I just want to check on your bite.” Rick said softly, wanting to be reassuring. “Then I’ll let you go, alright? I just need to check on you.”

Daryl sighed, stepping forward again and letting Rick run gentle fingers around his neck around the tender bite mark.

“How’s it feel?” Rick asked softly, moving his hand to rub the back of Daryl’s neck gently.

Daryl shivered a bit, leaning into the touch. “It don’t hurt. Feels kinda... tingly?”

“Guess that’s better than you being in pain.” Rick chuckled softly, pulling Daryl close enough to press a quick but gentle kiss to his lips.

Daryl grumbled a bit in protest but relaxed, letting his arms slowly move to wrap around Rick.

Rick couldn’t help but smile, one hand coming to cradle the back of Daryl’s head while the other wrapped around his waist.

They pulled apart after what to Rick felt like hours and he still wanted more.

“God, you’re good, darling.” Rick whispered, pressing their foreheads together lightly.

“Shaddup.” Daryl murmured, his cheeks a light pink.

“It’s true. As your alpha, I’m an expert.” Rick grinned.

Daryl scoffed. “You ain’t an expert on shit, Grimes.”

Rick smirked, leaning in close to his ear. “I think I’m an expert on making you scream my name.”

Daryl huffed heavily, shoving him away. “Being a good lay during a heat ain’t hard. Just have to have a dick.”

Rick scoffed, his alpha pride a little offended. “Had you breathless before my jeans ever came off.”

Daryl rolled his eyes and started to walk away.

“Where are you going?” Rick called.

“I’m huntin’!” Daryl called back. “I’ll be back ‘fore dark.”

“Be safe.” Rick whispered after him, knowing Daryl wouldn’t hear it.

Daryl spent the afternoon hunting, bringing back a collection of rabbits strung together hooked to his belt.

Admittedly, a part of him had been excited to see Rick, to see the proud and excited way he always acted when Daryl came back with a good hunt.

What he was greeted by instead... was Shane standing against the old fireplace near Daryl's tent.

"The hell you want?" Daryl asked, keeping his distance. He didn't like Shane, didn't trust him. To have him invading Daryl's safe space? The young Dixon had every reason to be on edge.

"Noticed something off earlier. Wanted to see if I was right." Shane commented, shrugging a bit. He had been wrong since the barn, maybe since before then.

"The hell you trying to find out?" Daryl frowned, setting down his cross bow and his catch of rabbits. He needed to start skinning them soon before the heat got to them.

"Thought I noticed something earlier by the barn." Shane explained, waving his hand vaguely. "You see, there was this real sweet... man, real sweet smell in the air, in between the whiffs of dead, course."

Daryl stiffened, touching the knife on his hip as a comfort to himself and a warning to Shane.

"Now, it was a bit strange, because... there ain't a single reason for that kinda smell around here." Shane explained, stepping closer. "Except maybe... *an omega*."

Daryl felt his lip curl and he turned to face Shane full on, feet shoulders' width apart to keep himself steady. "Surprise. Get to the point."

Shane was within arm's reach, leaning in close and sniffing curiously. "Damn... you're sweeter smelling up close. All good and warm like an apple pie."

He was grinning, his breath hot against Daryl's face. "You know how angry it makes me to see that mark on your neck?"

Shane's hand struck out suddenly, his fingers wrapping tightly around Daryl's throat, his thumb digging into the bite mark Rick had left.

"Lori's distant from me because she wants to be a good wife." Shane growled, squeezing his fingers and earning a sharp hiss of pain from Daryl.

"She's keeping me away from my pup, y'see." Shane explained. "Hiding behind Rick, cause he's a good guy, and he'll protect her no matter what."

"Sounds like her problem." Daryl rasped. "Fuck's it got to do with me?"

Shane grinned, licking his lips. “Well, you see, those two have it their way, and Rick’ll be daddy to my pup. I do *not* like that, especially with him being greedy and going on and claiming an omega during all that mess.”

“Get to your point.” Daryl growled impatiently. He was starting to get a little light headed at this point.

Shane chuckled before speaking calmly. “You tell Rick to step off Lori. You tell him that it’s my pup, my girl. Hell, I won’t even ask for Carl. Boy can make his own choice who he wants to look up to. But I want what’s mine, and Rick needs to realize that if he’s claiming you, he lets go of Lori. Make sense so far?”

Daryl gritted his teeth but gave a short and quick nod.

“’s what I thought.” Shane nodded in approval. “So you talk to Rick about that, or…”

“Last I heard, she don’t want nothing to do with you.” Daryl rasped.

Shane shook his head and continued. “Or he can keep Lori. He can have the pup and raise it all his own.”

Daryl frowned in confusion, but his silent question was quickly answered by Shane’s too hot tongue running up his cheek from his chin to his hair line.

“But if he keeps them, then you’re *mine*. And I gotta tell ya, Daryl, I’ll be just fine with that idea too.” Shane chuckled. “Pretty little omega like you? I’d love to keep you knot drunk… stuff you so full of come you’d always be carrying a pup for me.”

Daryl felt bile rising in his throat and he turned his head in disgust. His natural instinct screamed against all this, hating all the talk about him as a baby maker like some kind of brood mare. But the fact that it was Shane… so soon after he had been claimed by his true mate made every fiber of his being scream out at the wrongness.

“Which one of those you thinking is a better deal?” Shane asked, eyes wide and mocking innocence.

“I’ll talk to Rick.” Daryl said quietly, looking away to avoid that gaze. He didn’t answer Shane’s question. He hated the idea of throwing someone, even Lori, to a crazed and possessive alpha. But still… being taken from Rick? Being force claimed and trapped with someone like Shane?

Shane let go of Daryl’s neck and stepped away. “Thank you, Daryl. You’re doing a man a hell of a favor there. See, you bat your pretty eyes or spread them long legs and Rick’ll do whatever you ask. It’s hormones, simple science. Man can’t help himself.”

“Stop talking and go the fuck away.” Daryl snapped. “Said I’ll do it, alright?”

Shane grinned, nodding a little before turning to walk back toward the camp while whistling a tune.

“Jesus Christ.” Daryl sighed heavily. “Fucking alphas.”

Chapter End Notes

Shane going a little crazy and threatening Daryl? That is 100% my jam

Chapter 9: Season 2 Episode 8

Chapter Summary

Rick's reactions to the last chapter and more bonding.

After that moment with Shane, Daryl was on edge, more distant and evasive. Rick had tried to come over a few times to talk to him, but Daryl brushed him off.

It hurt, made his chest ache and the new tether between them felt pulled too damn tight, but he managed it somehow.

At least, until after the sun set when Rick cornered him by the shed, the movement reminiscent of how Shane had crowded him earlier.

"I don't want to talk." Daryl said sharply, hoping one blunt statement would shut this down and Rick would leave him alone. Even though the omega part of him cried out for his alpha, wanting to be held and comforted and reassured that he was Rick's and Shane couldn't live up to his threat.

"We're going to talk. And we are gonna talk now." Rick said firmly, though he didn't raise his tone. "We're going to talk about why you smell like Shane. Now I know you can't stand him so I need to know that he didn't do something to hurt you, because all day you been ignoring me and Shane's been strutting like a damn peacock."

Daryl winced a bit. He'd hoped that Rick hadn't put two and two together on that. He didn't want to cause more trouble.

"Shane came and talked to me earlier when I got back from huntin'." Daryl explained. "Said he'd noticed the way I smell when we were over by the barn and wanted to see if he was right about me."

Rick frowned but remained silent. He wasn't trying to hide what Daryl was from everyone else, but Shane certainly wasn't someone he wanted using that against Daryl.

"He wanted me to make you let him have Lori." Daryl explained. "Said it was his girl and his pup. Said it just wa'nt right for you to keep a wife, a baby that ain't yours, and get an omega to boot."

Rick growled low in his throat, crossing his arms over his chest to stop from reaching out and grabbing Daryl to hold him possessively. His inner alpha demanded he take Daryl right there and then, to cover him in his alpha's scent and leave countless marks everywhere Rick could reach.

But he refused to scare off his mate like that. He was a human man first and foremost and he would listen before acting on stupid base instincts.

“What else?” Rick asked quietly.

Daryl shook his head, stepping back and turning his head away. “Nothing, man. ‘S all.”

“No, it’s not.” Rick shook his head. “Please don’t lie to me when I’m already upset, Daryl. Please.”

Daryl sighed, keeping his eyes on the ground, his shoulders tense like he was bracing for a strike.

“Daryl.” Rick pleaded, dropping his hands. “If he hurt you, I need to know. I won’t let him disrespect you just because he thinks less of you for how you were born. You deserve better than that.”

Daryl sighed, glancing up slightly. “Said either you give him Lori and the baby, you step off, and let him have what’s his... Or you could keep them, and... he’d take what’s yours instead.”

Rick frowned in confusion for a moment before that frown transformed into a snarl as he realized what the threat had been.

“So either I force a woman who doesn’t want him to be his... or he tries to *rape* and claim my mate? Someone who *shouldn’t be involved in this shit at all?*” Rick’s tone was raising, his voice taking on more of a snarl throughout that. His breathing was getting heavier, and his mind was filling with an angry red haze.

“Rick_” Daryl tried before Rick interrupted him.

“I’ll fucking kill him.” Rick whispered. “I won’t let him put his hands on you. I don’t care what he thinks he’s owed, but he won’t force anyone into something they don’t want. Especially not you though. He can’t have you. No one can.”

Daryl swallowed hard, bouncing on his heels. The air around Rick was getting tangible, getting heavy with the strong scent of alpha.

Daryl squirmed, hating his body’s natural reaction. He needed to get this under control. For god’s sake, he only had so many pairs of jeans... and he really didn’t want to have to find and wear the shitty padded omega underwear just because Rick was acting all dominant around him.

He caught the sight of Rick’s nose twitching slightly and stepped closer, just one step but it had an obvious effect on them both.

Rick’s jaw clenched and his eyes locked on Daryl.

“You’re willing t’ kill for what’s yours?” Daryl asked quietly. “Fight another alpha to protect it? You’d fight *Shane*... over me?” Despite his best attempts, he was getting drawn into the

delirium.

“You are *my* mate.” Rick said quietly, though his tone was firm and sure. “Means you are the most important thing in my life. I won’t let anything or anyone hurt you. Not even Shane.”

Daryl swallowed hard, shakily touching the side of his face where it still burned from Shane’s tongue touching him. “Then come get rid of the smell. Come make me forget he tried anything.”

He would blame it on the heat later. Blame the stupid dizzy feeling and the ache in the pit of his stomach on the stupid hormones going hay-wire in his head.

With that permission, Rick lunged, crashing into Daryl and shoving him to the grassy ground. Somehow he had the sense to put his arm under Daryl’s head so that it didn’t hit the ground.

“You’re mine.” Rick whispered, pressing several hard kisses over Daryl’s lips. “Not Shane’s. Not anyone else’s.”

“Yours.” Daryl whispered naturally, wrapping his arms around Rick and clinging to him tightly. “Rick...”

He tilted his chin back, exposing the healing scar of their mating mark to Rick. “Please... ‘m yours.”

A growl low in Rick’s throat caused a shiver to course through Daryl and the omega had to bite back a whine.

“I’m gonna make sure you get what you need.” Rick whispered, biting down hard on the bite mark again, reopening the barely healed over wound.

Daryl barely managed to bite back a sob, his body jerking and jumping against Rick under the feeling of it.

He felt the tether between them snap firmly into place, solidifying further. It felt perfect and right, and everything Daryl needed right now.

Daryl bit down hard into his bottom lip, his eyes clenched shut tightly.

Rick lifted his head a bit, lapping at the wound lightly to clean it of blood for his mate.

“Rick...” Daryl whispered, feeling a bit woozy. Not a bad kind... just a heady sort of... almost like the floaty feeling he felt after an orgasm.

“Mine.” Rick whispered, his voice sounding distant and off like he wasn’t really there in the moment.

“Yours...” Daryl murmured, rocking his hips up against Rick’s once.

“We need to get into our tent.” Rick decided.

“Yes.” Was Daryl’s short and quick response. The two men scrambled to their feet and made it the distance to their tent in record time.

Chapter 10: Season 2 Episode 9

Chapter Notes

Remember, bold text is quoted directly from the show.

“So, I need you to run into town real quick and bring him and Rick back.” Lori explained, crouching down next to where Daryl was shaping more arrows. He needed something to do while he was bored and his body still ached from Rick’s possessive little showing only a little over an hour ago.

Having his mate leave so soon after sex left Daryl a little grouchier than his normal brand of bitchy.

“Daryl.” Lori said expectantly, frowning at him for not jumping to do as she asked.

“Your bitch went window shopping.” Daryl grumbled up at her. **“You want him? Fetch him yourself. I got better things to do.”** He didn’t really. He was whittling for god’s sake, but he wasn’t going to run the second Lori asked like everyone else did. She wasn’t queen bitch around here.

“What’s the matter with you?” Lori asked him in confusion. Her tone wasn’t concerned. It was annoyed. “He is your mate, isn’t he? Shouldn’t you be worried about him? **Why would you be so selfish?”**

Daryl stood then, taking a few steps so that he didn’t hit the woman in his growing annoyance, **“Selfish? Listen to me, Olive Oyl. I was out there looking for that little girl every single day. I took a bullet and an arrow in the process. Don’t you tell me about me getting my hands dirty.”**

He pointed the knife at her to emphasize his point before thinking better and lowering it. He might just think it was a good idea to use it.

“You want those two idiots? Have a nice ride.” He waved her off, turning to walk away. **“I’m done looking for people.”**

Lori looked frustrated, like she was on the verge of speaking before thinking better of it and storming off.

Daryl looked after her, his lip curling a bit in annoyance. That woman got under his skin with her holier than thou bullshit.

He did, admittedly, feel a bit guilty about how he’d spoken of Rick, but he was frustrated. Instead of getting to enjoy his happy little post-orgasm high, Daryl had gotten his mate pulled

away to chase some dumb old man who went running off to town for a drink while his family was falling apart.

Daryl remembered the pained expression on his mate's face when he pulled away, having not knotted and thereby essentially suffering an awful case of blue balls. And the omega had been pissed off since. Because someone else had called and Rick had gone without a second thought.

Daryl was just frustrated. His bond with Rick was still too fresh... too fragile. It felt like Rick could get pulled away at a moment's notice. It was true literally and physically.

What was stopping him from realizing he wanted the whole family unit thing and go back to Lori?

In the back of his mind, he heard a quiet reminder of Rick earlier, calling Daryl his. He smothered that thought down quickly. He was supposed to be angry and bitchy. Not fantasizing and getting riled up.

Daryl felt a shudder run up his spine, the faint echo of shots ringing out. He jumped a bit and looked around, quickly realizing that the shots weren't real. He'd heard them though.

Daryl could hear a heartbeat not his own in his mind, but one that he knew at a deep level.

"Rick?" Daryl frowned in confusion. He closed his eyes and tried to focus. He tried to picture their bond, like a rope tether keeping them connected over a long distance and it began thumping with the same heartbeat he had felt before.

He tried calling Rick again, this time calling toward the bond. The vibrations of the tether began to slow, returning to a normal pace and becoming background noise.

I hear you... Daryl reached out again, smiling a bit at the warm feeling he felt coming back through. It was happiness and relief. It was definitely Rick.

Daryl opened his eyes again and smiled to himself. So maybe he couldn't stay mad at Rick. *Could he really be blamed?*

A few hours later and the group still hadn't returned. Carol came out to ask Daryl if he'd seen Lori and he responded honestly.

Carol began to walk away before coming back and pleading for him not to do this... *not to pull away...*

And she was right. Daryl could see that. He wasn't an idiot. Knowing they had failed Sophia had taken Daryl's reason for mattering in the group. So he had backed away, pulled in and closed all those doors.

Except Rick. Rick who had weaseled his way in with those warm blue eyes and sweet words. He felt like home and made Daryl feel like he didn't need anyone else. It let Daryl be his reclusive self while still getting to have his mate. Win-Win.

Carol being here reminded him of those bonds though... the protectiveness he had felt over Carol and her daughter since meeting them. It hurt. And Daryl Dixon did not know how to handle hurt.

"I've already lost my girl." Carol said softly.

Daryl stood quickly and practically growled. **"That wasn't my problem neither."** He paced around, bringing another log to his fire and silently wishing that Carol would leave. Maybe she would walk away quietly and Daryl wouldn't make more of an ass of himself.

Thankfully, she did leave. *At least for a while.*

Carol returned almost half an hour later, looking over the rabbits Daryl had caught and hung to dry.

Daryl stepped out and startled her, proving that his mood hadn't gotten even significantly better. It had gotten worse if anything. Rick had been gone for hours now on something that should have taken one, max.

"I'm keeping an eye on you." Carol explained.

"Well, ain't you a peach?" Daryl's lip curled a bit.

"I'm not gonna let you pull away." She said softly. **"You've earned your place."**

"If you spent half your time minding your daughter's business instead of sticking your nose in everybody else's, she'd still be alive." Daryl snapped. He could see the hurt welling up in Carol's eyes but he couldn't quite quell his anger yet. He tried though.

"Go ahead." She encouraged, looking at him with teary eyes. Eyes that reminded Daryl too much of his shit childhood. Eyes of someone who was hurting but would keep taking it because it's all they knew. It was both the best and worst outlet for anger in the world.

"Go ahead and what?" Daryl asked, swallowing hard and gesturing for her to leave. **"Just go! I mean just go! I don't want you here!"**

When she didn't move, he pushed harder. **"You're afraid. You're afraid 'cause you're all alone. You got no husband, no daughter. You don't know what to do with yourself."**

"You ain't my problem!" He snapped, frustration and anger, more with himself than anyone else, began to well up. **"Sophia wasn't mine!"**

She wasn't his to protect. She wasn't his to save. But he had tried. He had tried so damn hard, because a kid who grew up like they did deserved a chance for better. Sophia deserved a chance to live a long and happy life where her father's abuse could become just a distant memory. But she'd never have it now.

"All you had to do was keep an eye on her!" Daryl was shouting now, leaning forward like an alpha would and making himself look bigger.

Carol flinched back and Daryl pursed his lips hard. She'd done exactly what he expected... it didn't make him feel any better though. No superiority to quell his anger. No comfort in his posturing.

She stood still, visibly taking deeper breathes for several moments but never breaking Daryl's gaze. Carol was telling him openly that she was afraid... but in the same breath showing that she cared enough to stay.

"She wasn't yours." Carol agreed softly. "But you tried... you did more for my little girl in a few days than her daddy did in her whole life. And you're hurting... but please, please don't pull away. You mean so much to Rick now... and he needs you, but more than that he wants you. To be a part of the group. Part of the family."

"You deserve that family, Daryl. And I wish you'd let yourself feel that." She continued softly. "Please, just... just try."

With that she finally walked away, leaving Daryl to stew in his thoughts.

Chapter 11: Season 2 Episode 11

After a week of keeping Randall locked up and tending his wounds, Rick and Shane finally agreed that they need to decide the boy's fate. Shane volunteered to interrogate him, but Rick wasn't a fan of that idea.

Daryl rolled his eyes at the arguing alphas and stated that he would handle Randall. Rick accepted the decision and moved on to other business. Shane had accepted it as well, mostly because he knew Daryl shared his feelings on the boy.

Daryl left the tent and Rick's embrace about an hour before sunrise. He didn't wake Rick up before he left, though the alpha was awake already and facing away from the door.

Nearly three hours later, Daryl exited the barn. His knuckles were bloody and bruised. Rick couldn't tell whose blood though. The omega's face looked cold as he told the group about Randall's people.

They all fell understandably silent, glancing around at each other wordlessly. It was almost like they had a group form of telepathy and were all thinking the same thing.

All except for Dale. Dale who, thanks to his age, was a bit of an elder. Everyone respected Dale's word, but no one really wanted to do the whole "let Randall live" thing. Rick though was a man who valued respect nearly as much as his family and agreed to allow Dale until sundown to talk to the group.

After that, Rick hurried off to catch Daryl by their tent.

"Gotta decide how you're gonna do it." Daryl commented as Rick approached.

"I have a few ideas that I'm working through." Rick sighed, moving to sit on the front of the burned out brick fireplace. "I've never executed a man before... Never even watched one."

"Watching wouldn't tell you nothing." Daryl shrugged. "Ain't like we got shit for lethal injection."

"No," He sighed. "No, we certainly don't."

"Could just shoot him." Daryl pointed out. "One shot 'tween the eyes." He gestured to demonstrate where like either of them needed clarification.

"I know." Rick sighed. "Could hang him though... save the bullet."

"Could." Daryl shrugged.

Rick rubbed his face tiredly. "Christ, Daryl, I don't know. I'll just... have to decide. Gotta do some thinking." He stood and walked over to Daryl, kissing his cheek before starting to walk away.

“That the only choice you gotta make?” Daryl asked quietly.

Rick paused, turning back towards him. “What do you mean, darlin’?”

“Shane.”

“What about him?”

“A week ago you were ready to kill him. Came to blows about it. Now you actin like it’s all normal again.” Daryl explained.

Rick sighed. “Shane and I... we talked. Told him that if he wanted to stay around, he had to respect my word as law on things around here. I am not letting him attack my mate. I will not force Lori to become his. She wants me to be the baby’s father, and I have decided to do so. The baby will need a father, and I’ve got a little experience.”

“Were you gonna tell me ‘bout this at any point?” Daryl frowned, unhappy with the idea of Lori having that kind of pull over Rick. Unhappy that Rick was going to have another baby with the bitch.

Rick sighed. “We had already discussed children, Daryl. You don’t want to have kids. I am_ I like being a father. It works out well for everyone, I feel.”

Daryl wrinkled his nose. “Lori’s just gonna use this to try and get you back. That’s all this is, man. You just ain’t seeing it.”

“Can we please discuss this later?” Rick asked tiredly. “Other things are more pressing right now than your hatred for Lori.”

Daryl’s lip curled visibly and he stomped over to grab his bow. “’m going hunting. Have fun figuring your shit out.”

Rick rolled his eyes, getting noticeably frustrated. “Daryl, you’re acting childish.”

“No, I’m actin’ like someone sick of being the ass you climb on when you’re horny or stressed.” Daryl snapped. “You want a bitch who’s gonna kiss your ass and agree with you on everything, go talk to your wife. When you’re ready to get your head out your ass and actually listen, you can come see me.”

Then Daryl did as Daryl does. He stomped off into the woods. He’d said his piece and was done with the conversation.

Now Rick had to add a pissed off mate to his list of problems at the moment.

An hour later, Daryl had returned from his short hunt and was taking count of his arrows. He wasn’t calm by any means, but he also wasn’t tearing through things and shouting now so that had to be a plus.

He still growled a little when he heard Dale approaching.

“The whole point of me coming up here was to get away from you people.” Daryl grumbled in annoyance.

“It’ll take more than that.” The old beta responded, taking Daryl responding as some sort of invitation.

“Carol send you?” Daryl sighed, pulling on his clean shirt and buttoning it up.

Dale shook his head. **“Carol isn’t the only one who’s concerned about you... your new role in the group.”** He gestured to Daryl and the general area, obviously referring to being mated to Rick.

“Oh man.” Daryl sighed. **“I don’t need my head shrunk. This group’s broken. I’m better off fending for myself.”**

“You act like you don’t care.” Dale responded, his eyes going wide with disbelief.

“Yeah, that’s cause I don’t.” Daryl said bluntly, pulling on his vest.

“So live or die, you don’t care what happens to Randall?” Dale asked. Daryl fought the urge to roll his eyes. Of course, Dale was trying to recruit him.

“Nope.” Daryl answered simply.

“Then why not stand with me?” the older man offered. **“If it really doesn’t matter one way or the other.”**

Daryl couldn’t help but scoff then. **“Didn’t peg you for a desperate son of a bitch.”**

“Your opinion makes a difference.”

Daryl rolled his eyes. **“Man, ain’t nobody looking to me for nothing.”**

“Carol is.” Dale said pointedly, pointing back toward the group before to his own chest. **“and I am. Right now. And you obviously_ well, you have Rick’s ear.”**

At the mention of the alpha, Daryl’s mood soured more. **“Rick just looks to Shane. Let him.”**

“You care what happens here, Daryl. It’s in your nature to want to protect. You can’t fight against it. Not for long.” Dale spoke pointedly.

Daryl shook his head and threw his bow over his shoulder before walking past Dale. **“Sure, I can. Done it all my life.”**

“You cared what happened to Sofia.” Dale reminded him softly. **“Cared what it meant to the group. Torturing people? That isn’t you. You’re a decent man. So is Rick. But Shane... he’s different.”**

Daryl turned back to face him, squinting against the sun. **“Why’s that? Cause he killed Otis?”**

Dale looked shocked, stepping closer. **“He tell you that?”**

Daryl shrugged. **“He told some story... How Otis covered him and saved his ass. Then he showed up with the dead man’s gun.”** He turned his back to Dale again. **“Rick ain’t stupid. If he didn’t figure it out, it’s because he didn’t wanna.”**

He started walking again, pausing for only a moment. **“Like I said, the group’s broken.”**

During the meeting later in the evening, Daryl stood at the back of the room. Rick took up a spot just a few feet in front of Daryl, giving him a good position to pivot and ask the younger man’s approval during the conversations.

Daryl listened dimly, occasionally throwing in his opinion where he felt necessary. He tried to ignore the hopeful way Rick kept looking back at him. He so desperately wanting Daryl to have an answer. One that could fix everything.

Daryl could feel through their bond Rick’s panicked jumble of emotions, He wanted to protect their own, but he didn’t want to just let a man who threatened their safety walk free.

Somehow in his emotional spiel, Dale got through to Rick. It was clear on the alpha’s face. Rick’s mind was set though, whatever side of the fence his decision lie on, he was going to be adamant.

Dale squeezed Daryl’s shoulder on the way out, speaking quietly but clearly. **“This group is broken.”**

Rick glanced over and met Daryl’s eyes only seconds later, his expression showing that he had heard Dale and wasn’t going to let this go silently.

Daryl took the opportunity to excuse himself from the house with a small nod, walking out and back to the relative quiet of his tent area. Relative being the key word because of how many damn people kept intruding on the quiet.

“Daryl!”

“Every time.” Daryl grumbled, turning to face Rick.

Rick sighed, lowering his head a little as he approached Daryl. “You said when I was ready to listen, I could come back... well, here I am. A very lost and confused man who really needs his mate’s help.”

Daryl sighed, glancing up at Rick slowly. “What do you think I can help you with? Thought your mind was made up. Could see it on your face.”

Rick shook his head. “It is... but it’s not. See, the right thing to do... or at least the human thing to do is take him out and let him go.”

“But?” Daryl drawled, crossing his arms over his chest.

“But I can’t risk it.” Rick said softly. “A group like that... we can’t afford for Randall to make it back to them. The only way to know our people will be safe... is to kill him.”

“Sounds like you got your answer.” Daryl shrugged.

Rick sighed, “How am I supposed to live with that? Making the decision to end a man’s life... with no proof that he’s even a threat.”

Daryl glanced over at him and answered quietly. “You trust me. I talked to him. I felt him out... He isn’t as harmless as he’s trying to play. First chance he gets, he’ll bolt for his buddies and lead ‘em right here.”

“I know.” Rick said softly. “I know it. I do. I’m just... just overthinking.”

“Part of who you are.” Daryl sighed.

Rick responded with a laugh, stepping forward and wrapping his arms gently around Daryl, who returned the embrace.

“Like how I keep putting my head in my ass?” Rick joked, using Daryl’s own words from this morning.

Daryl chuckled softly. “Oh yeah, just some of the Rick package.”

When night came, Rick sent Daryl to get Randall and bring him to the barn.

It was strange to be standing between Daryl and Shane here... but Rick found it immensely comforting. Like he’d regained his right hand with Shane and grown stronger with Daryl as the left.

Rick looked between the two, ignoring the sniveling and sobbing of the boy in front of him.

Shane looked like he had during a thousand arrests, hands on his hips and legs braced while he looked at Rick expectantly. Because Rick was the senior officer, and he made the decisions.

When Rick’s eyes moved to Daryl, he could feel his own position change. It was amazing the difference some subtle positioning made.

Rick had seen Daryl sleep... during sex... riding his bike. Each gave him a different expression. Right now though, if he didn’t know better, Rick would swear Daryl was an alpha.

His expression was firm and he was standing to his full height, not lowering his gaze like he tended to do when he wanted to avoid people. It made Rick very aware of just how broad Daryl’s chest was. And that stern set to his jaw nearly made Rick’s knees weak.

“Would you like to stand or kneel?” Rick finally addressed Randall, drawing his gun.

Randall continued to cry and plead, but Rick blocked out the sound, focusing instead over the boy’s shoulder at Daryl.

Daryl who didn’t hesitate to kick Randall in the back of his wounded leg and drop him to his knees. *Well, I guess he’s kneeling.*

“Do you have any final words?” came Rick’s quiet voice, looking down at Randall. The pleas of ‘please don’t’ made Rick’s chest ache, but he had to shove that down.

Rick decided to look at Shane and Daryl again, needing the reassurance in this being the right choice. He received a quick nod from each in turn. He focused back on Randall now, resting his Python just above the boy’s blindfold in the middle of his forehead. A kill shot, especially this close.

Rick swallowed hard and cocked the gun, his finger moving to the trigger and just barely touching it...

“Do it, Dad. Do it.”

Rick faltered immediately, looking toward the door where Carl was now standing. He could feel his gun hand tremble and guilt and panic began to flood his system.

Dear god, is that what he wanted to show his son? Is that who he wanted Carl to become? Someone merciless who killed simply because trusting might be dangerous? Rick couldn’t do that. He couldn’t let himself fall down that rabbit hole. Because he didn’t think there was a way back out.

“Take him away.” Rick said softly, uncocking his gun and lowering it. **“Take him away.”**

Daryl gave him a look of pure disbelief before doing as told, pulling Randall none too gently to his feet and dragging him toward the barn down before he even had a chance to get his feet under him fully.

Rick was left alone in the barn with Carl after Shane stormed out in frustration, and Rick was at a total loss for words.

He could think about what to say later. He had to think about what to think first.

Rick put his hand on Carl’s shoulder and led him back to their camp, looking at multiple sets of eyes turning to focus on him in unison.

“We’re keeping him in custody for now.” Rick spoke, noticing the looks of relief and distress given by the different members of their camp.

“I’m gonna find Dale.” Andrea spoke up, hurrying off. She was the only person who seemed relieved to know that Randall was still breathing.

“Carl, go inside.” Lori spoke quietly, her eyes not once leaving Rick’s face. **“Now, please.”**

After the boy did as he was told, Rick stepped closer to Lori so that he could keep his voice down. **“He followed us... he wanted to watch.”**

Rick let his head fall, sighing heavily. **“I couldn’t_”**

“That’s okay.” Lori cut him off quickly, moving into the small space separating them and bringing her hand to Rick’s cheek before speaking more softly. **“That’s okay.”**

And for a moment there, Rick saw the woman he’d fallen in love with over a decade ago. Her eyes were soft and understanding. There was no sign of the betrayals and hurts that had come between them since Rick’s return.

Rick let himself be pulled into an embrace, Lori’s fingers gently running through the curls at the base of his skull as they had a thousand times before.

Despite the comfort she brought, he felt a pit forming in his stomach. Lori was doing this as the caring and dutiful wife... not as an innocent friendly gesture.

Rick found himself looking over her shoulder, expecting Daryl to appear and look betrayed or furious at him, but that didn’t come.

Maybe... maybe things would be okay. Maybe Rick and Lori could shift into a friendly sort of co-parenting relationship. Hell, maybe even Shane would settle down and they could all fall back into being the close unit they had always been.

Rick and Lori separated and sat in comfortable silence by the fire.

Until the screams began.

“Get Carl.” Rick instructed Lori before yelling over his shoulder. **“T-Dog, get a shotgun. Now!”**

Then Rick was tearing across the property, throwing open a gate in the process without even slowing down. He had a singular focus on saving whoever was in trouble. He wasn’t losing family tonight.

The screams grew louder, changing audibly from fear to pain and Rick pushed harder.

“Help! Over here! Help! Run!”

Daryl...

Rick’s stomach churned as he skidded to a stop and knelt beside Dale, sparing his mate a quick glance over before focusing.

Rick held Dale’s face between his hands to make the man focus, whispering quiet encouragement like ‘it’ll be okay’ and ‘we got you’.

But the pained sounds didn’t stop leaving Dale.

“Get Hershel!” Rick shouted, trying to direct and comfort at the same time. He called Hershel directly a few times before he had to focus on the man in front of him again.

The quick back and forth with Hershel blurred in his mind, ending with the older alpha giving Rick a blunt but apologetic look. They couldn’t save Dale. There was nothing they could do.

Rick screamed in frustration, pacing in quick circles as he tried to think through the panic. There was crying all around him. Dale was still groaning. There was only one solution.

Rick knelt beside Dale’s head, wiping his hand over his own face several times. He needed some kind of miracle here.

“He’s suffering.” Andrea whispered, facing Rick before adding with a sob. **“Do something!”**

Rick nodded, glancing at Shane who actually looked remorseful. They shared a nod and Rick drew his gun.

“C’m on.” Shane nodded. “Real quick, man.”

Rick aimed his gun and tried to focus, but he couldn’t. His hand shook and his breathing faltered.

He vaguely registered calloused fingers touching his gun hand, taking the gun carefully from him. Rick realized quickly that it was Daryl and stepped back, letting the younger take his place. Letting Daryl fill his role...

Daryl knelt beside Dale and pressed the Python to his forehead, his expression unreadable to Rick behind him.

What little Dale could move, he pressed his head against the muzzle. He was telling Daryl to do it. To put him out of his misery.

“Sorry, brother.” Daryl said quietly.

Then he fired.

Chapter 12: Season 2 Episode 12

Chapter Summary

All hell breaks loose on the farm.

“I should have been able to do it.”

“You ain’t gotta do everything, Rick.” Daryl answered quietly, leaning against the stone fireplace close to his_ *their* _tent.

“He was suffering.” Rick insisted, throwing his hands up in frustration. He’d been pacing back and forth, his expression twisted in pain and guilt. “I had the gun in my hand and... and I *couldn’t* pull the trigger.”

“I know you couldn’t. That’s why I did.” Daryl nodded. “You ain’t got to do everything.”

“Stop saying that!” Rick snapped before the fire seemed to leave him, his shoulders slumping. “I just... I feel like I can’t do anything, Daryl. I couldn’t shoot Randall. I couldn’t shoot Dale. How am I supposed to protect our people if I can’t_”

He stepped closer to Daryl and dropped his forehead on the younger man’s shoulder, which Daryl accepted, wrapping his arms around Rick loosely to comfort him.

“They trust me to look out for them. To protect them.” Rick whispered. “Maybe Shane was right. Maybe I’m not strong enough to protect my own.”

“Hey.” Daryl said firmly, lifting Rick’s head so they were eye to eye. “You are not weak, Rick. You got a heart. A conscience. Most folks can’t say they’ve kept that with all this going on. But you can.”

“Dale was a mercy killing.” Rick insisted, his blue eyes welling with tears.

Daryl nodded, pressing his lips softly to Rick’s to comfort him a bit. “I know. But sometimes you ain’t the one ‘sposed to do something. I did it. For him. For you. For *all of us*.”

Rick shook his head, sniffing. “I don’t want you to have to keep saving me.”

Daryl smiled faintly, just a twitch at the corner of his lip. “I know, Rick. But that’s what we do. That’s what you do for yours. You take care of them. Handle what they need when they can’t. You and me. That’s what’s *mine*. And I’ll do whatever I got to protect that.”

“I’ve got more than just you though, Daryl.” Rick sighed heavily. “it’s you... it’s Carl. It’s Lori and the baby. It’s the entire group. I have to protect all of them.”

“You ain’t the only one who can do that though. Trust folks to do their part.” Daryl insisted. “And... maybe let Shane handle Lori and the baby.”

“What?” Rick asked in confusion, stepping back.

Daryl hesitated and repeated. “Let Shane have Lori and the baby. He wants ‘em. He’s got a claim to ‘em. And... and you got me. Right?”

“I can’t hand them over like property.” Rick argued. “Lori doesn’t want to be with Shane. I won’t force her to be.”

“Lori wants you back,” Daryl pointed out. “And she ain’t accepting the nice ways you’re trying to explain it. You told me even last night she was trying to worm her way back in.”

“She’s afraid of Shane.” Rick insisted quietly.

“Yeah, so she says.” Daryl mumbled. “Didn’t stop her from hunting him down earlier. Looked like they were having a great time.”

“Are you spying on people?” Rick raised an eyebrow.

“I was smoking a cigarette while your ass took forever getting’ dressed.” Daryl corrected. “Ain’t my fault I was payin’ attention.” He sighed, glancing at Rick and trying a different approach. “Look, I ain’t Shane’s biggest fan either, man. Especially since that shit he pulled when you went after Hershel.”

Rick frowned, obviously having not forgotten that. “You don’t have to worry about him, Daryl. I’ll protect you no matter what.”

“I know.” Daryl assured. “But ‘m just sayin’. If you really think he’s better and y’all are good... why not let him and Lori handle their shit without your help? Give yourself a little breathin’ room.”

Rick grumbled a little, absently fiddling with his watch. “It’s my job to look after everyone, Daryl. I can’t just... not look out for her.”

“Didn’t say you should.” Daryl corrected. “I just think you need time to focus more on you and yours.”

“Feelin’ neglected, darlin’?” Rick smiled slowly, stepping close to Daryl so they were chest to chest.

“Don’t go getting all growly.” Daryl warned. “Only got so many pairs of jeans.”

Rick chuckled a bit at that, holding his hands up innocently and stepping back. “No growling here, darlin’. I’ll be good... For now.”

Daryl rolled his eyes before touching his mated mark gently and adjusting the collar of his jacket to cover it a bit. The cool nip to the air was stinging the raw barely healed skin.

“We should go grab the map and plan out how far out we’re taking Randall.” Rick decided.

Daryl nodded in agreement. “You gonna try taking Shane again?”

“Probably not a good idea.” Rick shook his head. “You up for taking the drive?”

Daryl shrugged. “Don’t bother me none to get some air.”

“And you don’t have any problem with this plan?” Rick asked to clarify.

“I don’t see you and me trading haymakers on the side of the road, if that’s what you’re asking.” Daryl answered, squinting under the sunlight so he could look directly at Rick.

“Nobody’d win that fight.”

“Any fight we have would end pretty quick, I think.” Rick laughed. “You fight dirty.”

“So do you.” Daryl protested. “Doing that growlin’ thing and all.”

Rick grinned wolfishly. “All I gotta do is growl and you’d buckle? Good to know.”

“Fuck off.” Daryl said firmly. “You try that shit in a fight and I’ll make sure you don’t get laid for a long ass time.” With that statement, he turned to walk toward the house with his crossbow over his shoulder.

Rick laughed, watching his mate’s retreating back with loving eyes. He felt more confident with Daryl by his side than he had for years in his marriage. There was a weight absent from his shoulders that had only seemed to grow with every fight he had with Lori.

But now? He felt the tether between himself and his mate, a warmth radiating through his chest as pleasant as standing by a campfire. The tightness was loosening but still present, feeling less like it was ready to snap and more like he was drawn to exactly where he could find his mate at any given time.

Daryl just made the world a little less shit.

Rick sighed happily and followed Daryl, making it to the porch only a minute or two after he did.

Daryl unfolded the map in his back pocket and stretched it out on the porch table, pointing out a few paths available from the farm to areas where Randall could be left without being a problem.

“That thing on your neck is never gonna heal if you keep tearing it open like that.” Shane called, climbing the stairs to the porch and walking over to the other two.

Daryl folded up the map and cleared his throat, glancing at Rick. **“Imma take a piss.”** He didn’t wait for a response, slipping away quickly.

“Your boy getting skittish, Rick?” Shane asked, raising an eyebrow.

“Nah, he’s just ready to get this Randall business handled, same as me.” Rick answered, hands moving to rest on his hips.

“Uh-huh.” Shane nodded, his gaze trailing after the omega opening.

“Hope you aren’t planning on putting your hands on something not yours.” Rick commented, his tone casual but still a warning.

“Oh, I don’t need to put my hand in your cookie jar, Rick.” Shane chuckled. “Nah, see, I’m gonna get what I want outta all this. I can be patient til then.”

“Never known you to be patient, Shane.” Rick commented.

Shane shrugged, smirking. “Never knew you to be gay, but here you are with a pretty little male omega on your knot.”

Rick shrugged, not rising to the bait Shane was trying to goad him with. “Weird times we’re in, huh?”

Shane’s jaw twitched in annoyance, the feeling obvious in his expression.

Rick only smiled, feeling the comforting weight of Daryl against his chest even with the man some ways away.

It didn’t take a psychic to know something was seriously wrong.

Randall had escaped. He slipped his cuffs and escaped the shed where he was being kept, even relocking the door so no one suspected a thing.

Kid wasn’t that smart to start with.

But then the story grew. Shane showed up with a busted up nose and claimed Randall got the jump on him and stole his gun.

A kid Randall’s size wasn’t going to overpower Shane. *And the thinly veiled commented about a rock evening the odds from Shane even further cemented how wrong all of this was.*

When they were split into two teams, Rick and Shane on one and Daryl with Glenn on the other, the whole thing began to form together. Not that Daryl could make a claim like that without proof.

He did catch Rick by the arm quickly before they separated and murmured for him to be careful. Rick only nodded and hurried off with Shane.

Daryl led Glenn to follow the trail he caught on the ground, noticing that Rick was following Shane the complete wrong direction.

He shook his head and focused, walking Glenn through the woods and piecing together step by step what had happened.

Shane had walked with Randall out into the woods and taken off the blindfold. Shane had snapped Randall's neck and killed him.

The only part Daryl couldn't understand was how Randall had turned. No bites. No scratches. He died from the broken neck.

"Something ain't right here." Daryl mumbled, nudging Glenn as he walked past. "We should get back to the house..."

Glenn nodded in agreement and followed Daryl back toward the house. They had almost made it back...

When the sound of a single gunshot rang out.

And Daryl felt his chest tighten with panic.

Chapter 13: Season 2 Finale

Chapter Summary

Last chapter of this first story. There will be a short story that takes place between the seasons, maybe like five chapters or so, then I will begin the next story which will cover season 3.

Thank you for following the story! Hope you stick around for the sequels.

Also, this is a very quote heavy chapter because I genuinely liked how they handled the episode. I only added in my own bits where necessary.

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for [notes](#)

Daryl and Glenn made it back to the house where everyone was gathered on the porch. There was talking back and forth, going around in circles, but Daryl was only half invested.

Finally, Lori stepped in front of him and asked, expression genuinely concerned. **“Would you please get back out there and find Rick and Shane and find out what on earth is going on here?”**

Daryl hadn’t expected to see true concern from Lori. Something always seemed to lead her to act... but right now, it was just selfless worry. On top of that, she asked Daryl to do something.

She hadn’t glared down her nose at him and demanded his actions.

Daryl gave a quick nod in response. **“You got it.”**

“Thank you.” She whispered, squeezing Daryl’s arm before stepping aside to let him go.

After that, the night is a blur of motion and sound.

When the barn caught fire, Daryl tried to get to it on his bike but had to turn around quickly to save Carol.

He couldn’t see Rick or Carl... couldn’t see anyone. But with the herd filling the farm, it was only minutes before escape was going to be impossible. So with a deep breath, Daryl turned the bike around and drove off the farm.

When Rick made it to the highway with Hershel and Carl, the hope he had of their group having escaped was fading quickly.

Carl was panicked, insisting that they had to go back. They had to save his mom. Rick sadly tried to explain why they couldn't go back to Carl, but the boy walked back to the car quickly to hide growing tears.

Rick can't even begin to process this right now. The highway is where everyone would regroup if they'd made it out. So why were they the only ones here?

Why did he not hear a familiar motorcycle pulling up? Or see Maggie's green car? Why was everyone not here?

Rick tried to shake it off and walk after Carl, but Hershel's calm call of his name stopped the younger alpha.

"You've got to get your boy to safety. I'll wait here for my girls and the others. I know a few places. We'll meet up at one later."

"Where?" Rick gave a tired sigh. **"Where is safe?"**

When Hershel doesn't answer, Rick voiced his thoughts, feeling firm in the decision. **"We're not splitting up."**

"Please." Hershel insisted. **"Keep your boy safe. I'll hide in one of the cars. If a walker gets me, so be it. I've lost my farm. I've lost my wife and maybe my daughters."**

"You don't know that." Rick interrupted, taking a deep breath before adding. **"They'll be here."**

"And you don't know that." Hershel pointed out.

Rick turned to face Hershel again and spoke sharply. **"You're a man of God. Have some faith."**

"I can't profess to understand God's plan. Christ promised a resurrection of the dead. I just thought he had something a little different in mind." The older man's voice shook a little with barely suppressed emotion.

Rick was right there with him. He had the blood of his best friend on his hands. He had failed to protect his group. And he had lost... no, no he wouldn't even think that. He refused to consider the idea of Daryl being gone.

"We stick together." Rick said firmly, walking toward where his boy was sitting.

After a brief encounter with a walker on the highway, Hershel comments that he's not sure how much longer they can stay.

"I-I'm not leaving without Mom." Carl spoke, looking between the two men.

“So, we’re just gonna walk away?” Rick asked Hershel in a harsh whisper. **“Not knowing if my mate, my wife, your girls are still out there? How do we live with that?”**

“You’ve got only one concern now. Just one.” Hershel responded back in the same quiet and firm tone he always seemed to have. **“Keeping him alive. And nature may be throwing us a curveball, but that law is still true.”**

Rick looked around anxiously, searching for some other idea before crouching down in front of his son. **“Carl. It’s... it’s not safe here...”**

Then a very familiar sound interrupted him, and Rick found himself standing, letting out a heavy breath that sounded vaguely like hysterical laughter in his relief.

Slowly, Daryl’s motorcycle cut through the debris on the highway and came toward them. Following soon behind it was Maggie’s car. And behind that, the beat up old blue farm truck.

Rick looked to Hershel, wanting some confirmation that he wasn’t just seeing things.

Hershel’s smile was all the confirmation Rick needed, rushing around one of the wrecked cars to where Daryl’s bike slowed to a stop.

Daryl barely had time to stand before Rick’s arms were wrapped tightly around him, the alpha’s face buried in the leather clad shoulder of his lover.

“You made it.” Rick whispered. **“I was afraid...”**

“Shit like that can’t kill me.” Daryl mumbled, pressing his face against Rick’s neck before pulling away. **“Got nine lives. Like a damn cat.”**

Rick nodded and went to check on the rest of the group, following Carl over to Lori and kneeling down to embrace the two of them.

As the group embraced and reunited, Rick returned to Daryl’s side. He still hadn’t even bothered to climb off his bike.

“Where’d you find everyone?” Rick asked, unable to stop himself from smiling down at Daryl. Because he was safe and alive.

“Well, those guys’ tail lights zigzagging all over the road... figured he had to be Asian, driving like that.” Daryl answered, earning a chuckle from Glenn.

“Where’s the rest of us?” Daryl asked, standing up off his bike and stretching to pop his back.

“We’re the only ones who made it so far.” Rick answered.

Lori of course asked about Shane, and the only reaction Rick could give was to shake his head. Now wasn’t the time to talk about what happened.

Glenn asked after Andrea, but Carol answered that she saved her. T-Dog added that he saw her fall.

Beth told Hershel about Patricia then asked about Jimmy. Rick reluctantly told her about the RV being overrun with Jimmy inside. It broke his heart to hear the young girl cry. How much loss could one person take in such a short span?

“You definitely saw Andrea?” Carol asked softly, looking to Lori who responded. **“There were walkers everywhere.”**

“But did you see her?” Carol asked.

Daryl shook his head and turned back toward his bike. **“I’m gonna go back.”**

“No.” Rick said quickly, grabbing Daryl’s arm before he could even register moving.

“We can’t just leave her.” Daryl insisted.

“We don’t even know if she’s there.” Lori said softly.

“She isn’t there.” Rick shook his head. **“She isn’t. She’s somewhere else... or she’s dead. There’s no way to find her.”**

“So we’re not even gonna look for her?” Glenn asked sadly.

“We gotta keep moving.” Rick answered, finally removing his hand from Daryl’s arm. He hadn’t noticed he was still clinging onto him.

The group agreed on heading east and loaded back into their vehicles, having to leave behind the blue truck. It had been on its last leg to begin with. The fact it got three people to safety was a miracle in and of itself.

They managed to get almost two hours before Rick’s station wagon ran out of gas, and they had to stop.

Rick tried to rally everyone and keep spirits high. He knew they were all exhausted. He knew things felt hopeless right now, but there had to be somewhere to go. Somewhere they could make safe. They just had to find it.

Throughout his little speech, Rick kept glancing to Daryl. The unwavering trust he saw reflected back gave him confidence. They could do this. They would be alright.

Rick spotted a small enclosure nearby, with walls on three sides. It wasn’t much, but it should block the wind enough to keep a fire burning. And it gave them only one entrance to watch.

Beth asked what they would do if the herd came through, or if another group like Randall’s appeared.

Daryl, ever the blessing, interjected about finding Randall. Rick faltered a bit when Daryl added that he’d died of a broken neck and turned without a single bite.

Rick's expression must have shown he knew more than he was letting on because several voices began to question him about it.

"We're all infected." Rick answered quietly, looking around to the looks of confusion on the faces of everyone around him.

"What?" Daryl asked, stepping closer to Rick's side.

"At the CDC, Jenner told me." Rick admitted. **"Whatever it is, we all carry it."**

"And you never said anything?" Carol asked in disbelief.

Rick shrugged. **"Would it have made a difference?"**

"You knew the whole time?" Glenn spoke up.

"How could I have known for sure? You saw how crazy that mo_"

"That is not your call! Okay, when I found out about the walkers in the barn, I told, for the good of everyone." Glenn pointed out.

Rick sighed. **"I thought it best that people didn't know."**

The group fell silent then. As Rick looked out over them, he reached Daryl and had to swallow back a lump in his throat. Daryl was looking down, not even meeting Rick's eyes.

It hurt... But Rick knew he'd earned it. It was a pretty big betrayal.

Rick sighed heavily and walked toward the walls they would be camping in tonight, standing just a few feet from the entrance.

He heard foot falls behind him and braced for a verbal lashing, only to have a pair of arms wrap around him instead.

He started to lean back into the touch before pausing with a heavy sigh. The arms offering comfort were too small, too frail. The body behind him was small and soft where he wished for hard muscles.

"I'm sure you had your reasons." Lori said softly against his shoulder. **"Is there anything I can_"**

"I killed him." Rick said bluntly, swallowing hard before continuing. **"I killed Shane. He came at me."**

Lori slowly retracted her arms, taking a step back from Rick.

"He killed Randall to get me into the woods. He planned it. I had, I had no choice. I gave him every chance and he kept leading me further out." Rick took a deep breath and continued. **"He pushed me. And I let him. After a while, I knew what he was doing, what he was up to. And I kept going. I didn't stop."**

He looked down at his hands, still bloody. He could still see the knife in his hand. **“I could have, but... I just wanted it over. Dogging me every step of the way. Acting like I stole you and Carl. Like I was in the way. I just wanted it over. I wanted him dead.”**

He turned his head slightly to the side, glancing back at her. **“I killed him... he turned. That’s how I knew Jenner... Jenner was right. Carl put him down.”**

Behind him, Lori backed up, sniffing from where she was now doubled over crying.

It almost made Rick angry. But only almost. He was too emotionally drained for this. So much had happened. He was exhausted.

Rick tried to reach out, maybe comfort Lori, but she backed away, looking at him like he was some kind of monster.

She had been terrified of Shane. She had nearly begged him to protect her from Shane because he was dangerous... And now she acted like Rick killed him, his best friend, out of malice.

Rick shook his head, walking into the walled enclosure to make sure it was secure. Make sure there was nothing biting or slithering to harm his family.

“Don’t know if it was the right thing... but I trust you meant right.” Came Daryl’s quiet voice behind him.

“I didn’t even hear you on the gravel.” Rick gave a weak laugh. “Sure you’re not a ghost?”

Daryl huffed a short laugh and shook his head, walking around in front of Rick and leading him further in so they were hidden from the others’ view.

Rick wanted to ask what Daryl was doing, but he was being pulled into a hug too quickly.

The warmth of Daryl’s body... the smell of smoke and leather... Then there was Daryl, the freshness and safety of the forest after rain. They all came together so beautifully, so perfectly.

Rick pulled his arms in between their chests, letting himself acknowledge the ways Daryl was bigger than him. He was broader, more muscular where Rick was lean and lanky. It was like having a human wall to block out the world.

“Thank you.” Rick whispered against his shoulder. “Just... for everything.”

Daryl hummed quietly, leaning back against the wall with Rick against his chest. And Rick just closed his eyes, letting the world fade away... if just for a few minutes.

The fire was kept pretty steadily burning. Enough for everyone to be around and stay warm, so long as they didn’t try for too much space.

Daryl had been able to build and light it pretty quickly once Glenn and Maggie came back with fire wood.

“We’re not safe with him.” Carol whispered from beside Daryl. **“Keeping something like that from us.”** She glanced over her shoulder before asking. **“Why do you need him? He’s just going to pull you down.”**

“No, Rick’s done alright by me.” Daryl shook his head, glancing back up at her. He didn't feel the need to add that leaving would hurt like hell even if he wanted to. Which he certainly did not want to. **“What do you want?”**

“A man of honor?” She offered quietly.

Daryl frowned, saying bluntly. **“Rick has honor.”**

He glanced up to where Rick was standing at the entrance. He had been patrolling, walking multiple laps around the run down structure and keeping a vigilant eye on everything around him.

When the group heard a twig snap, everyone was quickly on their feet and defensive.

Maggie, being the strong headed alpha she was, insisted they leave. That they needed to move before another herd came through.

“No one is going anywhere.” Rick said firmly, a hint of rumble in his tone that had Daryl’s inner omega immediately take notice. Every alpha had that tone. It was more than their voice. It was powerful and firm. It was terrifying. Daryl had grown up knowing that hearing that first rumbled threat was his only warning to run.

Science could probably explain it. Maybe it was pheromones or maybe it was just confidence. Daryl wasn’t an expert.

He did however, step closer to Rick to support him.

“Do something!” Carol insisted.

“I am doing something!” Rick snapped. **“I’m keeping this group together, alive.”** His voice was all rumble now, as rocky as the gravel under their feet.

Carol took a few steps back, having the same omega response to that tone that Daryl had. Panic and concern.

Rick spoke again, sounding more like himself. **“I’ve been doing that all along, no matter what. I didn’t ask for this!”** He turned to the group and practically snarled. **“I killed my best friend for you people, for Christ’s sake!”**

The group fell silent, everyone waiting on bated breath. Rick again took a deep breath to calm himself down.

“You saw what he was like, how he pushed me, how he compromised us, how he threatened us. He staged the whole Randall thing, led me out to put a bullet in my back. He gave me no choice!”

Rick glanced over to Daryl, his voice wavering. **“He was my friend, but he came after me.”**

Daryl heard Carl crying, muffled against his mother’s chest, but he didn’t turn from Rick.

“My hands are clean.” Rick said shortly, glancing at Lori and Carl.

“Maybe you people are better off without me. Go ahead.” He gestured toward the entrance. **“I say there’s a place for us, but maybe that’s a pipe dream. Maybe, maybe I’m fooling myself again. Why don’t_ why don’t you go find out yourself? Send me a post card.”** Rick spat the last part.

“Go on.” Rick goaded. **“There’s the door. You can do better? Let’s see how far you get.”** He looked around at the group and shrugged his shoulders. **“No takers? Fine. But let’s get one thing straight.”**

He stepped forward, standing nearly in the middle of the group. **“You’re staying... this isn’t a democracy anymore.”**

With that, he turned to go back to his patrolling.

Daryl stepped out behind him, following Rick around the side. “Hell of a speech there, Officer Friendly.”

Rick scoffed. “Had to get my point across. Those people want to run and do things their way? That’s fine. I say let ‘em. I’m going to protect what’s mine. My family. My people. They want to step outside of that, they’re not my problem anymore.”

Daryl shrugged. “Makes sense to me.”

Rick sighed heavily, glancing over at Daryl. “You’re not worried? Angry? Thinking I’m a monster?”

Daryl sighed, pulling his cigarettes out of his shirt pocket. “Want to know what I’m thinking, Rick?”

“I asked.” Rick nodded.

Daryl stayed quiet for a minute, lighting his cigarette and taking a long drag.

“Thinking it’s a damn fine night to get railed in the woods.”

Rick paused in shock for a moment before breaking into laughter, shaking his head. “You amaze me, Daryl Dixon.”

“Told you. I’m full of surprises.” Daryl shrugged

“Ain’t that the truth.” Rick sighed

Chapter End Notes

Comment with your favorite moment of the series! I'd love to hear what everyone wants me to add more of or what people want to see less of. Drop a comment or come talk to me on tumblr!

I am TalesofMeridian over there <3

End Notes

It will be explained later on in the story why no one knows about Daryl being an omega (well besides Daryl). Rick can feel the draw toward him but has no idea why. Just wanted to explain quickly.

Please [drop by the Archive and comment](#) to let the creator know if you enjoyed their work!